

In Dialogue



In Dialogue

*Our dialogue is
the dialogue of life,
the dialogue of the people,
in which everyone
can participate¹.*

¹ Chiara Lubich,
Meeting of bishops of various Churches,
Rocca di Papa (Italy), 26 November 2003.

*Communion in Action Report 2022
Focolare Movement*

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For comments and suggestions on the 2022 Communion in Action Report, please write to bdc@focolare.org.

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Contents

To be Apostles of Dialogue	4
Dialogue as a Lifestyle	5
The Focolare Movement In Dialogue	6
1943-2023 80 years of Dialogue	8
Introduction	12
Dialogue among the Churches	16
Dialogue among Religions	34
Dialogue within Cultures	48
Dialogue in the challenges of the world	64
Dialogue in Institutions	76
The Financial Statement	86
The value of working together: the network of stakeholders and institutional partners	90
The Focolare Movement's Centres for Dialogue	91
Statistics	92

To be Apostles of Dialogue

“How does God see us as ‘apostles of dialogue’?”

In practice, this means that each time we are in contact with one or more brothers or sisters, directly or indirectly, by means of a telephone call, a letter, a job carried out for their benefit, prayers said on their behalf, we all feel that we are involved in an unending dialogue, that we are called to dialogue.

How?

By being open to our brothers and sisters, by listening, empty of ourselves, to what they want, to what they are saying, to what worries them, to what they desire.(...)

In this way and only in this way, by continually living the ‘spirituality of unity’ or ‘of communion’, can I effectively contribute towards making my Church “a home and a school of communion”; can I work towards furthering, with the faithful of other Churches or ecclesial Communities, the unity of the Church; towards achieving with people of other religions or cultures ever wider spaces of universal fraternity”².

*Chiara Lubich**

² Chiara Lubich, ‘Apostles of Dialogue’, Castelgandolfo (Italy), 22 January 2004 Conference Call.

* Chiara Lubich (1920-2008, is the founder of the Focolare Movement). In December 2003, to mark the 60th anniversary of the Movement, Pope John Paul II wrote her a letter, where he described the members of the Movement as ‘apostles of dialogue’.

Dialogue As a Lifestyle

Dear friends,

The publication of this Communion in Action Report comes at a difficult and very painful time for humanity. We are all horrified at the wars and conflicts that are disrupting the lives of millions of people in so many countries: in Europe, in the Middle East, and in various nations of Africa and Asia. All this, together with other global challenges such as poverty, social inequalities, polarisations, challenges our hope for peace.

At the same time there are many events and actions of solidarity - often unknown and hidden - that bring people of different faiths, cultures and traditions together. The recent Synod of the Catholic Church on synodality was a living testimony to this and has encouraged us to walk together to welcome the many ‘whys’ that challenge us at these times. All this encourages us to commit ourselves with more determination to express concretely the evangelical love that - as Chiara Lubich, the founder of the Focolare Movement said - “knows how to open up to others and collaborate with all people of good will to build together unity and peace in the world”³.

Today it is urgent to create spaces of encounter to break down prejudices and divisions, to encourage listening deeply, to establish authentic relationships and increase a culture of dialogue which more and more becomes a way of living together for individuals and for nations. In its many forms, dialogue is the specific aim of the Movement and the 2022 Communion in Action Report offers an account of the life and economy of the Focolare precisely from this perspective.



I hope that these pages will give a witness and will be an instrument to contribute to the implementation of societies that welcome diversity so as to form a world where nations respect and love each other as one family.

I hope you enjoy reading it!

*Margaret Karram,
President of the Focolare Movement*

³ Chiara Lubich, “Whoever is not against us is for us” (Mk 9:40) from *Words of Life*, p.413

The Focolare Movement in Dialogue



The word dialogue contains in its etymology its reason for existence: the use of a conversation between two or more people to express ideas or opinions on a particular topic.

Dialogue can be a social practice, a literary form, a tool, a model that allows for more or less agreed discussions.

Dialogical conversation is always dynamic, it can aim at an understanding and a search for truth or it can leave the interlocutors with different ideas, without however excluding the possibility of a relationship.

Who

Dialogue is and has been the way of life of the Focolare Movement since its origins, during the Second World War. In 1943, when the prevailing idea was weapons, conquest, and the annihilation of the enemy, Chiara Lubich, then a young teacher, chose the fragile weapon of love and unity to follow paths of peace and reconciliation, inspired by the Gospel. At a time when in the Churches and in societies the word dialogue was marginalized and only for a few visionaries, in Chiara it became praxis, methodology, a safe place where even those on one side or the other of the barricades could meet and talk to each other.

Dialogue, over time, has become the track on which choices and initiatives of fraternity have journeyed and are still journeying. These have spread from the small city of Trent, in northern Italy, to the 182 countries where the Focolare spirituality is present.

What

Collaborating with those who are committed to building a society that is more solidarity-based, more at peace, more respectful of the integral dignity of persons and ecosystems, the Focolare Movement promotes programmes and initiatives, at a local and international level, that make people and communities creative agents of change, in the most varied social, religious and cultural contexts where they are present.

How

To be "In Dialogue" is the characteristic of every person and every project that identifies with the Focolare Movement or is inspired by its spirituality. Not only "a doing" therefore, but "a way of living" that is supported and enhanced by listening, welcoming, compassion, charity, mercy, as summarised in the key principle of every culture and religion: the Golden Rule "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you".

The Communion in Action Report 2022 of the Focolare Movement, brings together a selection of the many actions, choices, personal and communitarian initiatives that have contributed, with many people in the world, to heal the wounds of divisions and polarisations and to go forward on the path of evangelical fraternity. The Report is also an open and participatory instrument of communion to which each person can add a page, a story, a suggestion **in Dialogue** with humanity and our planet.

Guide to reading the Communion in Action Report

After the initial introductions, the Report provides a brief chronology illustrating some of the stages of the Focolare's 80 years of commitment in the different areas of dialogue. This is followed by the projects and initiatives carried out in 2022. In carrying out the *mission* of unity, the Focolare Movement establishes various paths of dialogue: dialogue with the faithful of one's own Church; dialogue among the faithful of different Churches and ecclesial communities; dialogue with the faithful of different religions; dialogue between believers and people of non-religious convictions and dialogue with the world of culture. In drafting the 2022 Report, it was decided to illustrate these paths through the following areas: the Christian Churches, World Religions, cultures, global challenges, institutions. A chapter is dedicated to each one, beginning with three stories, followed by projects from around the world. Within each chapter, the section "At the Roots", presents the origins of a particular aspect of the Dialogue, while the Focus explores a specific initiative or theme. The last part contains the Economic Balance Sheet and the network of stakeholders and partners, who are fundamental and invaluable companions in the journey towards fraternity and peace among peoples. To include in these pages all the work of the Focolare members in the field of Dialogues has not been possible: the *websites* and official channels of the Focolare Movement will offer more in-depth information.

1943-2023 • 80 Years of Dialogue



1943, 7 December

In the middle of World War II, in the city of Trent (Italy), Chiara Lubich gives her life to God. The Focolare Movement is born.

1945

Chiara and her first companions read the Gospel in a cellar: "May they all be one" (Jn 17:21). To achieve the unity of people with God and with each other becomes their ideal.

1955

The spirituality of the Movement begins to spread in the Swiss Reformed Church.

1960

Darmstadt (Germany) Meeting with a group Lutheran pastors: they want the spirituality of unity to spread in their Church.



1967

Istanbul (Turkey) Meeting with Athenagoras I, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. The beginning of a path of dialogue with the Orthodox Church.

1966

London (United Kingdom) First contacts with the Primate of the Church of England who encourage meetings with members of the Anglican Church. In the photo is the meeting with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Donald Coggan.

1966

Fontem (Cameroon) Meeting with the head of the Bangwa tribe and with representatives of traditional religions.

1961

The "Centro Uno" of the Focolare Movement for dialogue among the Christian Churches is born.



1977

London (United Kingdom) Chiara Lubich receives the Templeton Prize "for progress in religion", pictured with Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh who presented the award.

1978

The International Centre of the Focolare Movement for dialogue with people of non-religious convictions is founded.

1981

Tokyo (Japan) Meeting with the Reverend Nikkyo Niwano, founder of the lay Buddhist movement Rishso Kosei-kai and with 10,000 Buddhists.

1982

Start of collaboration of the Movement with the multi-religious forum, Religions for Peace. Chiara Lubich is nominated among the honorary presidents.

1991

São Paulo (Brazil) The Economy of Communion is born: an economic system and culture based on communion, on gratuity and reciprocity.

1992

Castel Gandolfo (Italy) First international conference with people of non-religious convictions.

1943-2023 • 80 Years of Dialogue



1996

Paris (France) Chiara Lubich receives the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education.



1996

Naples (Italy) Birth of the Movement for Unity in Politics.



1997

New York (USA) Chiara Lubich was invited by Imam W.D. Mohammed and was the first Christian woman to speak at the Malcom X Mosque.



1997

New York (USA) Chiara Lubich speaks at the United Nations on the theme 'Towards the Unity of Nations and the Unity of Peoples'.



1998

Chiara Lubich initiates Dialogue of the Movement with Contemporary Culture.



1998

Buenos Aires (Argentina) Pact of fraternity with members of the Jewish community.



2001

Coimbatore (India) Meeting with the Gandhian inspired movement Shanti Ashram.



2001

Innsbruck (Austria) "1,000 cities for Europe": meeting of 1,000 European Mayors, in collaboration with the Chamber of Municipalities of the Council of Europe.



2000

Assisi (Italy) Chiara Lubich meets the Franciscan Family.



1999

'Together for Europe', a journey of communion and initiatives among Movements and new communities of various Christian Churches.



1998

St. Peter's Square (Vatican) Pope John Paul II convenes the first international meeting of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities.



2003

Courses and conferences in collaboration between believers and those who do not have a religious belief.



2010

Assisi (Italy) Pact of communion and mutual love among ecclesial movements and religious families.



2019

Birmingham (United Kingdom) Maria Voce (President Focolare Movement 2008-2021) signs the Charter of Peace for Forgiveness and Reconciliation with Bhai Sahib Bhai Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia, Sikh leader.



2022

Rome (Italy) Margaret Karram, President of the Focolare Movement at the prayer for peace organized by the Community of Saint Egidio.

Introduction

The transforming effect of Dialogue

In a world plagued by wars, climate change, polarisation, poverty, the weakening of democracy and the erosion of human rights, we recall the teachings of Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement. As she 'waited' to enter a shelter under the bombings during World War II, she wrote: "I feel my helplessness, but I abandon myself to God. I base everything on a faith that does not crumble: I believe in the Love of God: I believe that God loves me, and in the name of this Love I ask great things of my life, and of the lives of those who follow my ideal, things that are worthy of people who know they are loved by God..."⁴.

Responding to the difficulties that surround us today, Pope Francis gives a message of hope. Rejecting the responses of "selfish indifference and violent protest," Pope Francis says "there is one option that is always possible: dialogue"⁵. Pope Francis explains that "Each one of us is called to be an artisan of peace, uniting and not dividing, extinguishing hatred and not pursuing it, opening the paths of dialogue and not erecting new walls!"⁶. In a similar vein, Chiara Lubich describes, "a love capable of becoming dialogue [...that] knows how to open itself up to everyone and collaborate with all people of good will to build peace and unity in the world together"⁷.

Dialogue is a commitment of the Focolare and is the subject of this annual report. I write having experienced firsthand the transformative impact of dialogue. As an American Jew growing up in predominantly Christian neighbourhoods, I had many Christian friends but feared Christianity because my grandparents had fled anti-Jewish persecution in Europe and I myself, as a member of a small religious minority in the United States, experienced marginalisation.

As an adult, I occasionally participated in multi-religious dialogue under the auspices of Reform Judaism. But that dialogue was limited to respect and tolerance. At a Christian-Jewish symposium, I experienced the Focolare's approach to dialogue, an approach that transcended respect and tolerance and embraced the recognition of God in the other. At that symposium, my fear of Christianity ended. Instead, I began to see Christians and Christianity as having a wisdom from which, as a Jew, I could learn. As Chiara Lubich taught Catholics, as a Jew, I could have loved God and my neighbour more deeply if I had learned to see God in people who are not Jewish.

I have tried to bring the Focolare approach to dialogue into my research, teaching and service as a professor of law. I teach at Fordham Law School, the Jesuit University of New York, where I am the faculty dean of our Institute on Religion, Law and Lawyer's Work. Since 2001, when the Institute was founded, there have been three directors. Each of them is a lawyer and has been a member of the Focolare Movement. Although our staff is mainly Catholic and Jewish, we

work collaboratively to promote dialogue between members of our academic law community that includes Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus and non-believers.

My experience of the Focolare Movement and its teachings has enriched my life so much that I am truly very honoured to present this Focolare Annual Report "In Dialogue".

The work of the Focolare is urgent and vital. Margaret Karram, the Focolare President, asks us to recognise the strength of dialogue even in the most difficult moments: "So many people, so many organisations are working to build bridges and no one talks about it. There is only talk of hatred, division, terrorism. We must not forget that even today so many people are working to build bridges. It is a seed being sown, even in this very difficult moment". It reminds us to 'commit ourselves to build a fraternal world and to do all we can so that these people and all those who are in the same conditions of instability and violence may find the path of respect for human rights; where justice, dialogue and reconciliation are the indispensable tools for building peace'⁸.

The extraordinary strength of this vision lies precisely in the fact that it is accessible to all of us, whatever our background. The Focolare Movement offers a model on how to find the sacred in every moment and in every relationship. As Rabbi Tarfon taught in my Jewish tradition, "The day is short, the task is great, the workers are lazy, the reward is great and the Master insistent ... It is not up to you to complete the task, but neither should you stand idly by".

To the Focolare Movement, "Yaasher Koach" - may you have strength to carry on your sacred work".

Russell G. Pearce

Professor of Law and holder of the Edward and Marilyn Bellet Chair in Legal Ethics and Religion at Fordham University in New York (USA)

⁴ Chiara Lubich, *Lettere dei primi tempi. Alle origini di una nuova spiritualità, a cura di Florence Gillet e Giovanni D'Alessandro*, 6, Città Nuova, Roma, 2010, p. 44.

⁵ Pope Francis, *Encyclical Fratelli tutti* (2020) paragraph 199.

⁶ *Ibid.*, paragraph 284 (citando *Talk at Internatipnal meeting for Peace organized by the Sant'Egidio community*, 30 September 2013, in *Insegnamenti* I, 1 [2013], 301-302).

⁷ Chiara Lubich, *Essential writings*, Città Nuova, Roma, 2006, p. 484.

⁸ <https://www.focolaremedia.com/magazine/content/ask-god-gift-peace#:~:text=Everyone%20knows%20the%20negative%20stories,in%20the%20power%20of%20prayer>

Dialogue is hope

I have the honour to participate, with these brief reflections, in the Communion Report, which is being presented, as Margaret Karram has already mentioned, at a difficult and very painful time for humanity. Those who dedicate their lives to dialogue, feel the need for a review to discover their shortcomings and failures. What we have failed to do, in our own sphere, to prevent, even a little, the catastrophes that surround us. Dialogue, it seems, is an inexhaustible and constantly urgent mission. We can always do better, so we must be creative and innovative and never be repetitive or monotonous. How can a spirituality of simple, everyday life overcome the hatred and wars that separate peoples and nations? It is a challenge that calls us to think deeply!

If the mission of religion is to transform the human being, making them more human and divine and more open to God and their fellow human beings, dialogue lies at the very heart of this journey of humanising and divinising. Dialogue allows us to put ourselves in the other person's shoes, "borrowing" their eyes to see the world differently and in a more inclusive way. The inability to feel the other's pain is the origin of evil. Compassion, on the other hand, is twofold salvific: not only does it save the person or group in need of help, but it saves the person who is helping even earlier, from selfishness and closure. Indeed, it saves the humanity of both.

In times of crisis, there is a greater need for a religiosity of mercy and peace. The Koran tells how Abraham was thrown into the fire, but this fire became "cool and sweet" thanks to God (21:69). Belonging to Abraham manifests itself in being impervious to hatred, and to transform the fire of hatred into love and mercy. It is not easy, but it is the only way to overcome evil and not reproduce the violence suffered. We must see in every human being a brother or sister, see in the human the divine Presence, and venerate that Presence by making it more visible and full of light.

Dialogue allows the believer to come out of his shell to discover the universality of the divine Presence in the world, which cannot be contained or limited to a single faith. No one can monopolise or manipulate God. God belongs to everyone, and everyone seeks to belong to Him in different ways. The encounter between these ways of worshipping God and serving humanity makes them mutually richer and stronger, allowing, in a next step, spiritual solidarity and collaboration at all levels.

The Focolare Movement has developed a new concept of evangelisation and mission, which could be summarised in this way: to see and appreciate all the elements of truth, beauty and goodness in the brother and sister of the same faith or of a different faith. Indeed, to encourage and help these elements to grow, because their growth and prosperity is a common good for all humanity.

The mission is not to make people in our own image and likeness, but to make them in the image and likeness of God, who is Present in their faiths and cultures, and in their hearts and minds. It is the ability to overcome walls and divisions, and help the other, whom we have loved, to bring out the best in them. To do this, we must love truly and fully to be free from any traces of jealousy and competition. Religious jealousy, called 'exclusivism' in theological jargon, risks turning faith into an ideology of power and domination, which is, truly, a betrayal of the spirit of divine mission of what is human.

Adnane Mokrani

Muslim Theologian, Professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University,
Rome (Italy)



1 The courage of understanding and reconciliation

The charism of unity is expressed in a spirituality that makes dialogue a way of life in the relationships among Christians within the Catholic Church, who belong to different Movements and new communities, as well as among Christians of various Churches and ecclesial communities. We know that there are divisions among the Churches, but the call to live for unity stems from Jesus himself, from his prayer, uttered shortly before his death, when he asks the Father: "May they all be one" (cf. Jn 17:21).

Unity, therefore, not *in spite of* the diversity that each one brings, but rather unity in diversity by cultivating respect and esteem for the other, for their specific characteristics, for the historical and theological paths of each Church which are all gifts that can be recognised and offered by one Church to the other. In this logic of gift Chiara Lubich, in a speech in Berlin in 1998, imagined a Church of the future where 'there will only be one truth, but expressed in various ways, viewed from various perspectives, enriched by many interpretations. (...) It will be a marvellous reality, as fascinating as a miracle, which will arouse the attention and interest of the whole world'.

In our increasingly multicultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and polarised societies, Churches can be laboratories where trust, peace, care for humanity and creation are practised, learned and reconstructed, if dialogue becomes a practice of daily life.

To be in dialogue between people, even of different Churches or faiths, implies the courage to embark on a path of proximity, knowledge, and reconciliation that follows the criteria and procedures of the different Churches, while at the same time seriously and decisively practising the love taught and lived by Jesus.

Sandra Ferreira Ribeiro and Enno Dijkema
Coordinators of the ecumenical dialogue of the Focolare Movement,
and of "Centro Uno" for the unity of Christians

Dialogue in the Catholic Church
p. 18

Dialogue among the Christian Church
p. 26

Focus: Centro Uno for ecumenical dialogue
p. 33

Il Segreto del Dialogo

"Making yourself one". In these simple words lies the secret of the dialogue that can generate unity.

"Making yourself one" with the other person is not a tactic or an external way of doing things; it is not just an attitude of kindness, or an absence of prejudice. (...)

'Making yourself one' requires people who are poor in spirit in order to be rich in love.

Chiara Lubich,
the interreligious dialogue of the Focolare Movement
Aachen (Germany), 13 November 1998



Stakeholders:

Diocese of Corpus Christi, Mother Teresa Shelter, Catholic Charities, Casa Real (home for elderly people with a low income), 12 parishes, Catholic Charities Respite Centre (Welcome centre for immigrants) at McAllen

17

Persons in contact:

325

Projects/made:

6

inter parish projects

* The Focolare are small communities of consecrated and married lay people, fully given to God, in conformity with their state of life. They are men and women of different nationalities and cultures who work, share their goods and animate the initiatives of the Focolare Movement throughout the world at the service of the Churches, especially in the most deprived communities, and institutions. There are 7,160 men and women focolarini in 742 focolares present in 83 countries.

USA

To add colour to the community and the Church

Justin Medina is from Texas and attends Corpus Christi High School. He tells everyone that when he experienced difficult times, and adolescence brings many of them, his soul was always lifted up by the love he found in the *Holy Family* parish. "An open and welcoming community that welcomes everyone," Justin describes it, "that makes you feel that you belong and can be a part of everything that happens".

Located on the Gulf of Mexico, Corpus Christi is one of the main ports of Texas and is known for its beaches and nature reserves. However, poverty, drug trafficking and the presence of gangs rank it as the seventh most dangerous city in the state. 18.2 per cent of the residents live below the poverty line, a figure that becomes 52.5 per cent among people without a college degree.

In 2018, two focolares*, one for men and one for women, moved to the diocese at the request of the local bishop, who has known and experienced the spirituality of unity since he was a young priest. Two focolarine work at the Newman Centre, the Catholic university pastoral centre, where students are offered a service of accompaniment and spiritual formation, together with projects of voluntary work, vocational experiences and guidance.

A focolarino who works in the vocations office, together with another focolarina, is co-responsible for the *CONNECT* programme dedicated to teenagers preparing for the sacrament of confirmation. To these meetings, Justin often invites his non-practising friends, because he knows that in this community, there is an open and authentic dialogue as a way to find God, oneself and the others.



Two consecrated focolare members are coordinating work on the opening of the first *Fazenda da Esperança*** community in the United States: a holistic addiction rehabilitation programme that will also offer its services to neighbouring cities. The life of the Gospel nourishes the *Holy Family* parish, where two priests from the Focolare Movement and some Spanish-speaking focolarini work to accompany the Hispanic community, who are among the poorest in the area. The dialogue on the needs of the area has led to the creation of a food pantry for the neighbourhood, a group of volunteers serving a welcome centre, a network of formators and companions for young people and a training programme for altar servers and their families. 'Let's colour our community', the social workshop inspired by the Head-Heart-Hands educational model, which invites people to live the Gospel together and bring its light to the most deprived places, has given life to various social initiatives, also generating interest in other parishes of the diocese.

** *La Fazenda da Esperança* is a therapeutic community that has been working since 1983 to rehabilitate people addicted to drugs and alcohol. Its rehabilitation method focuses on work as a pedagogical tool; on living together to experience belonging to a family; on the spirituality of unity as a process to find the meaning of life. There are 120 Fazenda centres in the world.



* Renato Chiera founded the Casa do Minor in 1986, where Brazilian children living on the streets in extreme poverty and vulnerability are taken in.

** Cube of love is a dice on whose faces are phrases that summarise the aspects of Christian love, as expressed in the Gospel.

Brazil
A school of Dialogue, Communion and Mission

"I am black. My religion is of African descent, and I was the victim of many prejudices. I lived on the streets, but then Father Renato Chiera* introduced me to the Cube of Love**, and that changed my life. I will leave here today with a greater desire to love. I have learnt that life is not about being loved, but about loving and that we are completely one, with one Father!". These words of F.A. are almost a confession, at the conclusion of the School of Dialogue, Communion and Mission that was held online in June 2022. It involved **62 people** from **14 ecclesial communities** including *Canção Nova*, *New Horizons*, *Oasis da Paz*, which operate in the diocese of Fortaleza.

Four themes were discussed: Dialogue with Memory, a Decalogue for Dialogue, a Path of Communion and a Path of Mission. All included the sharing of life stories and projects. The **80-hour** course, certified by the *Centro Universitário Tabosa de Almeida (Asces-Unita)* of Caruaru, aims to increase dialogue and the culture of encounter between the ecclesial communities that are part of the *Condomínio Espiritual Uirapuru (CEU)*, a farm transformed into a space of faith, solidarity and communion among charisms operating in an area plagued by serious social inequalities and poverty.



Italy
Time for Partnerships



Pope Francis signed the 'pact for the economy' with over 1,000 young people who came to Assisi for the Economy of Francesco* event. "A new economy is not utopia" was the title of the 2022 event, which aimed to re-define economic processes by making them sustainable, inclusive, attentive to the poor.

* The Economy of Francesco: is an international movement of young economists, entrepreneurs and changemakers engaged in a process of inclusive dialogue and global change towards a new economy, following the vision and mission of Saint Francis of Assisi: to be brothers and sisters to humanity and for the environment.

Italian Catholic Action and the Focolare Movement have signed a pact of cooperation in the local Churches in Italy based on five themes: the global educational pact promoted by Pope Francis; the civil economy; political commitment; integral ecology; and training in ecumenism and interreligious dialogue.



Spain

At the Festival of Charisms in Granada, the ecclesial movements dialogued with young people, presenting the variety of charisms and the commitment of associations and groups in the various communities of the diocese. Within the Festival, the Focolare Movement and its expression in society, the New Humanity Movement, had a stand, where two moments were organised to present the spirituality of unity and the social actions inspired by it.

Participants: **40 movements, associations and fraternities.**

USA

For about five years now, the vocations department in the Diocese of Houston has chosen Chiara Lubich's 'Art of Loving'* as the code of conduct for their *staff*. This pedagogical methodology has become a formation programme for young men and women on a path of discernment and for those preparing to enter the seminary or already preparing for the priesthood. The Art of Loving is actively lived by over **80 young people.**

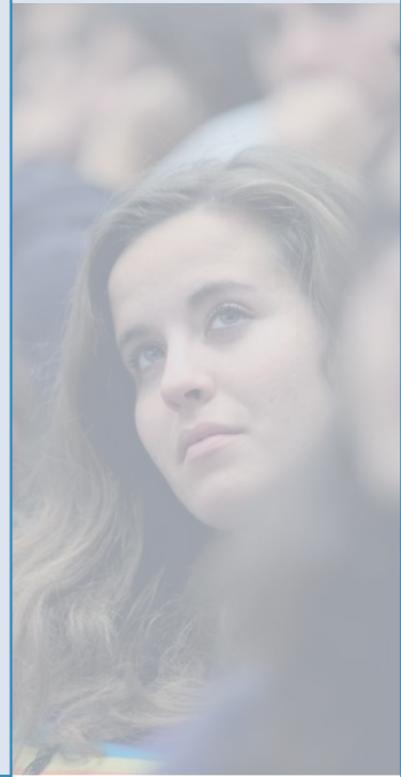
Ivory Coast

On the occasion of a meeting of dialogue and prayer for peace organised by the Community of Sant'Egidio in the city of Abidjan, the Focolare Movement together with several religious leaders signed a peace agreement, as a sign of collaboration and fraternity despite the unstable political situation in the country. At Christmas, this collaboration was made visible through a lunch offered to hundreds of children living on the streets.

Italy

"People of God, crossroads of diversity. One network with many knots" is the title of the international congress with representatives of dioceses, parishes, charismatic communities, priests and religious, to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the meeting of 7,000 priests, religious and seminarians, united by the spirituality of unity, gathered in Rome in the presence of Pope John Paul II on 30 April 1982. The more than 700 participants at the 2022 meeting renewed their commitment to generate communities in dialogue, inspired and guided by the Gospel.

* Art of loving: a spiritual methodology that Chiara Lubich took from the Gospel to contribute to a culture of peace, dialogue and harmony among peoples.



At the roots



On 30 May 1998, the eve of Pentecost, John Paul II called together Movements and new Communities with their founders in St Peter's Square in Rome to encourage these new realities of the Church, expressions of the charismatic aspect and coessential with the institutional one. Chiara Lubich made a commitment to strengthen the relationship of communion and fraternity between the Movements and the new Communities. Hundreds of meetings around the world were organised, recalling this experience in St Peter's Square with the participation of over 500 new ecclesial realities and the appreciation and participation of numerous bishops.



In Dialogue on the Synod of the Catholic Church

Communion, participation and mission: these are the three key words related to the Synod that the Catholic Church launched in October 2021 and which will close in October 2024. Pope Francis, inaugurating this three-year process of dialogue, invited the universal Church to be a Church of listening and proximity, and to be open to participation, renewal and mission.

The contribution of the Focolare Movement:

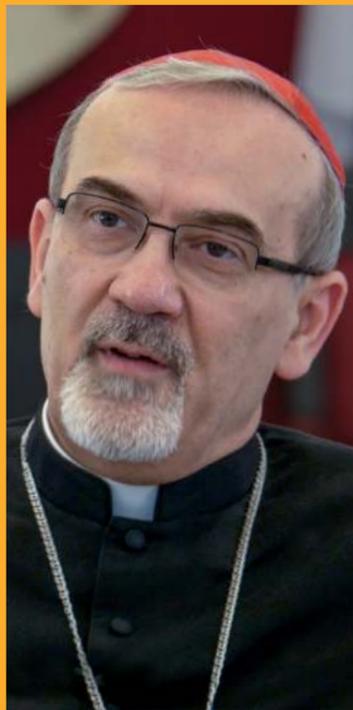
- **15,000 adults and young people** from **79 countries** participated in the first phase of preparation for the Synod through reflections and responses to the preparatory document.
- **500 meetings** to raise awareness of the Synod at the local level in different countries of the world
- **120 leaders** at the International Centre or in the different areas participated in training courses on synodality
- **21 reports** with testimonies and practices on synodal life
- **1 Training Course on Synodality** carried out by the Evangelii Gaudium Centre (CEG), a training centre within the Sophia University Institute, in synergy with the General Secretariat of the Synod and in collaboration with other training centres and academic institutes.

* Sophia University Institute is an academic institution inspired by the spirituality of Chiara Lubich. It is based in Loppiano, Italy. It offers master's degree courses, PhDs, post-doctorates and courses through e-learning.

Synod, a new Pentecost for Jerusalem

The church of *St Vincent de Paul* in Jerusalem was the setting for a Pentecost vigil animated by testimonies, prayers and songs prepared by the ecclesial movements in the context of the synodal pathway. The initiative stemmed from a dialogue with the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Pierbattista Pizzaballa. Noting how little the ecclesial movements meet, he wished, in consonance with the synodal process and "for the sake of our whole Church, that they would be able to work together without losing anything of the identity of each one". During the evening, different speakers recounted how the action of the Spirit through an encounter with a charism changed their lives. José Pablo, a rebel against the faith, abandoned by his father, chose the path of priesthood after his encounter with the Neocatechumenal Way. The encounter with the charism of Communion and Liberation changed Sobhy's life, while the meeting with the Community of Emmanuel saved Jean and Agnes' marriage. The experience of living the gospel in the Focolare Movement enabled Marcel and Boulos to remain at peace after the loss of their son Jack, aged only 15. Ghada, hardened by the harsh conditions of the war in Gaza began to make dialogue her way of life, loving everyone, even her enemies.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFjWb1-y0ug&t=53s>



Teo and Kery.

Telling the story of the Synod with cartoons

Teo and Kery, two funny cartoon figures, tell the story of the Synod to teenagers and answer their questions. Through cards on prayer, challenges and listening, they encourage young people to be protagonists of this moment in the life of the Church. The kit, created by the Italian section of the Focolare Movement, has been included among the official materials of the Synod and translated into English, Portuguese and Chinese.

The Synod of Movements

In Zaragoza, Spain, the movements created a group with those people who did not belong to a particular association or parish but wanted to contribute to the synodal path of the Church and reach out to the peripheries of society. The *Focolare Movement*, *Equipos Notre Dame*, *Cursillos de Cristianidad*, *Catholic Association of Propagandists*, *CECO (Ciegos Españoles Católicos)*, *Movimiento Familiar Cristiano* responded positively to the diocese's appeal.

6 Movements took part.

Conferences

The Identity of Movements and New Communities in the Synodal Path of the Church, promoted in Rome by the Pontifical Lateran University and the Sophia University Institute.

Vatican Council II and Chiara Lubich's Charism of Unity, organised in Florence (Italy) by the Sophia University Institute and the Chiara Lubich Centre*.

* The Chiara Lubich Centre is based in Rocca di Papa (Rome) and is responsible for the historical, cultural and literary heritage related to Chiara Lubich. It looks after study and specialised research on the ideas, values and documents of the foundress of the Focolare Movement.



Spain

In search of a new site for the Orthodox Church

During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, in the city of Almedralejo, some members of the Focolare approached people from various Churches to propose that they pray together. The leaders of the Catholic, Evangelical and Orthodox Churches of the neighbouring cities of Mérida and Badajoz promptly agreed. From that moment on, a beautiful friendship was born among all, which got involved helping to support the needs of the various communities. The Orthodox priest was informed that he would have to leave the facility he was using for worship and celebrations within a very short time. We shared the news with the ecumenical officer of the diocese and then we accompanied this priest to an interview with the mayor to inquire about other available premises. "We came away from the meeting with a new place of worship for our Orthodox friends". The community of Almedralejo" wrote: "We also received an official invitation from the diocese asking representatives of the Focolare Movement to join the ecumenism team of the Mérida-Badajoz diocese".

Nigeria

Weaving ecumenical relationships



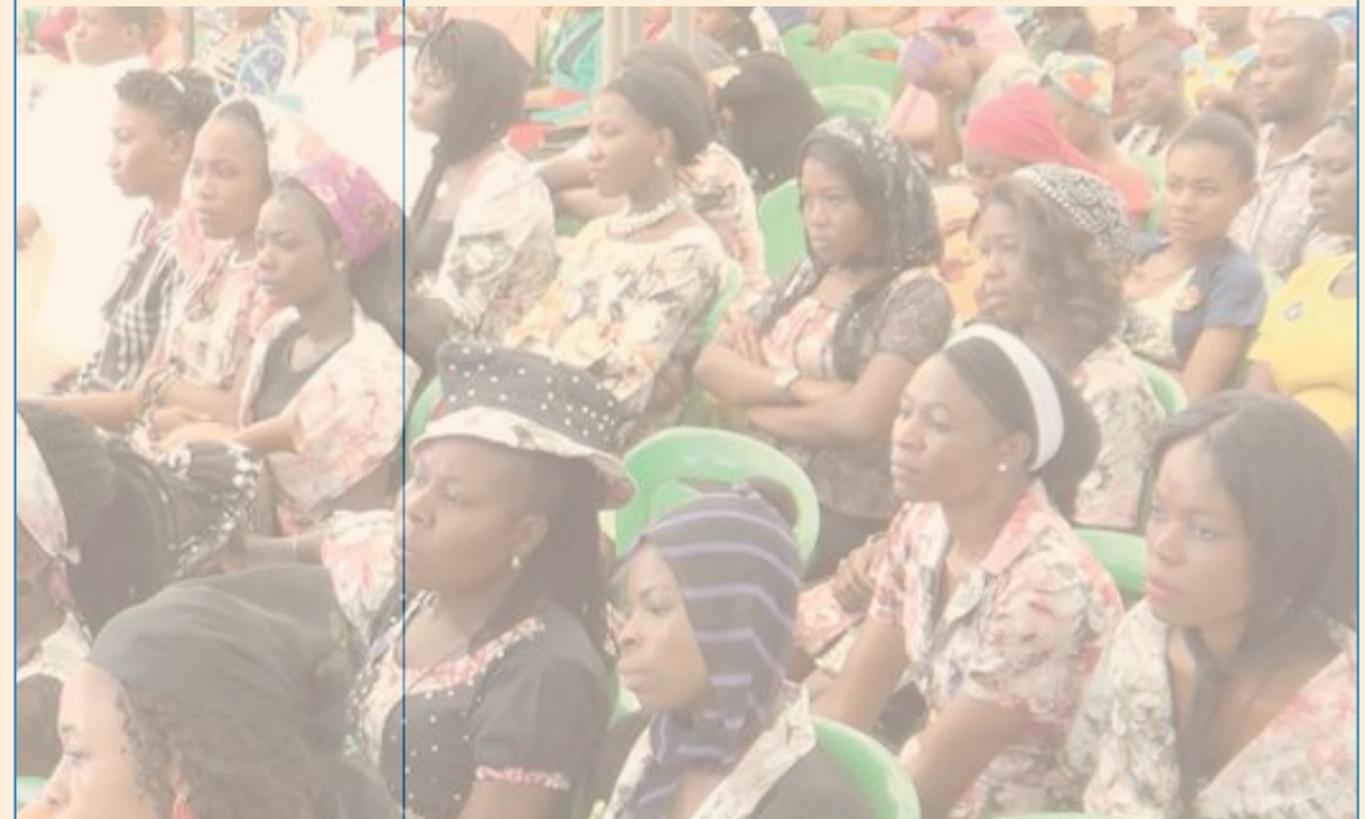
"Casa Alba" is not just the name of a dressmaking workshop where two years of advanced sewing training are offered to girls who want to best up their own businesses. Casa Alba for many of them is a new start in life. Seven young people, linked to the spirituality of the Focolare Movement, have lived together throughout the training period offered by Casa Alba in Onitsha, a city of over one and a half million inhabitants on the east bank of the Niger River. For the girls, the challenge of learning was combined with the fact that they belong to different Churches: Catholic, Anglican and Pentecostal. Diversity, even in the religious practices of their own church tradition, has enriched their knowledge and helped to overcome prejudices, making them a united community and a witness to harmony and cooperation even in the world of work. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and 75% of its population is under 30 years old, with an unemployment rate of over 14%.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Ecumenism and Charity

"Ours is an ecumenism of charity," is how Willy Masaka, president of the Lutheran youth of the *Eglise du Christ* in Congo, defines the solidarity activities carried out with his friends from the Focolare Movement. The two groups deliver gifts and basic necessities to rest homes and orphanages. Both Willy and the bishop of his Church, Bishop Nzimba Wanyolo Mossi, felt particularly supported by the spirituality of unity, also in their task of presiding over and coordinating the federation of the 98 Churches belonging to the *Eglise du Christ*. During the United World Week*, the young people of the two communities organised a football tournament and other activities to testify to this bridge of friendship, also with representatives of the Muslim world involved in that area.

* United World Week is a forum and expo for all initiatives that promote unity among peoples or contribute to achieving fraternity, as inspired by the Gospel. It is held every year from 1 to 7 May and is organised by the young people of the Focolare Movement.



Germany

"The love of Christ is moving the world to reconciliation and unity". This was the theme of the 11th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches (CEC) held from 31 August to 8 September 2022 in Karlsruhe with representatives of about 350 Churches, delegates of the Council and leaders of other faith communities working with the Council to contribute to the unity of the human family. The meeting was attended by a delegation from the Ukrainian Church and the Russian Church, testifying to an ecumenical platform that is always open to dialogue. The Focolare Movement was present with a group of 15 people. At the end, a document on three challenges common to all Churches was approved: climate justice, racial justice and equality between men and women.

Spain

The ecumenical group from **Valladolid** meets once a month for a Bible study and common prayer. Members of the group are Evangelical pastors, an Anglican priest, an Orthodox deacon and representatives of the Catholic Church. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity hosted liturgies in each of the city's churches, culminating in an interdenominational prayer on the last day with religious leaders from each church. Regular appointments for the city's Christian communities are 4 October, when an Ecumenical Prayer for our Common Home is celebrated, and the Feast of Pentecost. This work of dialogue and friendship has inspired the city government, and in March 2022, the Board of Religious Diversity was created to ensure the religious freedom of every citizen, to bring together the 11 denominations present in the area and to give value to the more than 100 places of worship where they gather.

Sweden

This is the 13th year of the Ecumenical Meeting 'A Path to Unity', in which Catholic, Anglican and Church of Sweden priests, together with the lay faithful, dialogue on common themes of the Christian faith. About 20 participants attended the meeting in 2022, on the theme "Mary and the vocation of the Church."

Great Britain

"God's Gift for the World" is the online course on the spirituality of unity with participants from the Anglican, Methodist, Baptist,

Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed churches from Great Britain, Malta, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Hungary and Belgium. Also present were two Anglican priests and a Lutheran pastor.

Hong Kong

In February 2022, an ecological campaign, started by members of the Lutheran Church, involved over 500 participants, a third of whom had no particular religious affiliation. In addition to a questionnaire inviting people to look at the Earth as a gift from God that we should take care of, two video clips were produced: one on sharing goods in the event of a pandemic, and another on reducing the use of plastic.

USA

Grassroots Ecumenism Summit. The Focolare Media editorial group brought together online 15 Christian Church leaders who proposed strategies and presented life experiences on how to learn to live and build unity among Christians, starting from their own community, social environment and with friends and colleagues, while respecting different traditions.

John 17. Friendship with the Pentecostal Movement John 17, which is committed to promoting the unity of all believers in Christ according to verse 21 of chapter 17 of St. John's gospel ('that all may be one') has inspired ecumenical meetings with representatives of the Focolare Movement and members of various Churches, in many cities in the United States and at the International Centre of the Focolare Movement in Castel Gandolfo, Italy.

Oceania

"Celebrating the time of creation", on 11 September 2022, was a time of prayer and reflection on the care of the environment and our responsibility to listen to the voice of creation. Promoted by the Focolare Movement and sponsored by the Council of Churches of Western Australia and Victoria, the event, in five languages, was attended by over 130 people, with songs and prayers also in the local language.

Turkey

An ecumenical summit on the future of the planet

"It is a joy for us to welcome you all (...) for the 5th Halki Summit of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which this year is jointly organised and sponsored by our dear sisters of the Focolare Movement and in particular its Sophia University Institute.

It is indeed a privilege to address the theme of our meeting on "sustaining together the future of the planet" with an educational and religious school that presents a unique ecumenical chair. This is dedicated to our venerable predecessor Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I and to the beloved Focolare founder Chiara Lubich. Both far-sighted leaders of our respective churches established valuable ecumenical relationships, which have been strengthened and consolidated in recent years. (...) The purpose of this summit is the comparative study of the ecumenical teachings and programmes initiated - separately and in common - by our beloved brother Pope Francis in the Roman Catholic Church and by my humble self in the Orthodox Church".

With these words of gratitude and fraternity, His Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I* welcomed the participants of the 5th Halki Summit that took place in Istanbul from 8 to 12 June 2022 on the theme "Sustaining Together the Future of the Planet". The Halki Summit is a meeting of scientists, journalists, entrepreneurs, theologians and academics who are committed to and who work towards a common vision of the environment, without disregarding the contributions made by ethics, spiritualities and faiths.

* His Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, Archbishop of Constantinople, has been the spiritual leader of 300 million Orthodox Christians worldwide since 1991. He is the 270th Archbishop of the Church that was founded by the Apostle Saint Andrew.



Turkey

The visit of Margaret Karram and Jesús Morán to Patriarch Bartholomew I

On 8 June 2022, Margaret Karram and Jesús Morán, together with some members of the Focolare Movement in Turkey, were received in audience by His Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, at the Fanar, seat of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. The meeting underlined the long and fruitful friendship between the Focolare Movement and the Patriarchate, and the "common journey" for the unity of Christians and all peoples.

Switzerland

The World Council of Churches (WCC) welcomed Margaret Karram and Jesús Morán to Geneva on 28 November 2022, 20 years after Chiara Lubich's last visit. They were received by the Rev. Professor Ioan Sauca, acting WCC Secretary General, and by the Rev. Professor Dr. Jerry Pillay, the new WCC Secretary General. The Focolare President expressed admiration "for the work that the World Council of Churches has been doing for 80 years to increase communion between all Christian Churches and bring the spirit of reconciliation and unity to the world". Professor Sauca encouraged the commitment to promote dialogue between Christians, Jews and Muslims.



Chiara Lubich and the ecumenical patriarch Athenagoras I of Constantinople



"It was 13 June 1967. He greeted me as if he had always known me. 'I was waiting for you!' he exclaimed and wanted me to tell him about the movement's contacts with Lutherans and Anglicans". With these words Chiara Lubich described her first meeting with the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I, which took place in Istanbul, Turkey. That first meeting, in Turkey, was to be followed by 22 others, plus meetings in Rome and Lucerne (Switzerland), in just five years. These meetings became a bridge between Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras, nourishing the climate until then unpublished, of reciprocal trust between Catholics and Orthodox that had already led to the annulment of ancient reciprocal excommunications on 7 December 1965 in two simultaneous ceremonies in Rome and Constantinople (Istanbul). The special relationship with the Patriarchate of Constantinople did not end with the death of Athenagoras on 7 July 1972, but continued under his successors Demetrius and Bartholomew I. In 2021, the Sophia University Institute of the Focolare Movement set up the "Patriarch Athenagoras I - Chiara Lubich" Ecumenical Chair as a research centre in the ecumenical world and a space for encounters and dialogue between Christians of various Churches, especially the Orthodox.

Focus

Ecumenical formation courses for members of the Focolare Movement since 1987

24

Ecumenical weeks since 1962

60

Meetings for bishops of various Churches since 1982

39

Centro UNO for ecumenical dialogue

Founded by Chiara Lubich in Rome (Italy) in 1961, the 'Centro Uno' Centre for Christian Unity is the international secretariat for the ecumenical dialogue of members of the Focolare Movement. Igino Giordani, co-founder of the Movement, politician, writer, journalist and pioneer of ecumenism in Italy, was its first director from 1961 to 1980.

Centro 'Uno' has been promoting ecumenical training courses for members of the Movement since 1987 and has offered 24 courses to date. In addition, since 1962 it has organised 60 Ecumenical Weeks open to all, where people live an experience of unity and mutual acceptance, a unique experience because of the diversity of traditions. It also supports local study seminars organised together with people from various Churches. Ecumenical topics are discussed in depth through the methodology of 'receptive ecumenism', based on respect for diversity and a commitment to learn from members of all Churches.

Since 1982, the Centre has also contributed to the organisation of conferences of bishops from various Churches, friends of the Focolare Movement, where there is the possibility to get to know one another so as to foster fraternal communion in Christ and dialogue in the light of the spirituality of unity. Encouraged by popes, patriarchs, Anglican archbishops, Evangelical leaders, presidents of the Lutheran World Federation and of the Evangelical-Lutheran Landesbischöfe, these gatherings are evidence of a deep spiritual friendship between religious leaders from various denominations and different countries. 2025 marks the 1700th anniversary of the first Church Council (325 A.D.) as well as the 60th anniversary of the lifting of excommunications between the Catholic Church and the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. In that year all Churches will celebrate Easter on the same date. Therefore the Centre is collaborating with other ecumenical Movements and institutions on all the initiatives that will take place to coincide with these anniversaries.



Dialogue among Religions

2 Diversity is a gift for me

Interreligious dialogue represents one of the most difficult and urgent challenges of our millennium. An all-inclusive dialogue, a sincere exchange of experiences, stories, projects, an open and multi-faceted collaboration in the face of the many challenges of a global society also becomes an instrument of *soft power* in finding solutions to misunderstandings and conflicts.

If it is true, then, that the patrimony of almost all religions is the so-called 'Golden Rule', which, in different expressions, says: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you; do not do unto others as you would not have them do unto you', establishing a relationship of mutual love and acceptance between believers of different faiths can become a model for civil society. For Chiara Lubich, dialogue does not primarily take place between cultures, religious principles or ideologies, but between people. It is together that one lives in dialogue and appreciates the contribution of the Truth contained in all faiths which is capable of enlightening every man and woman and guiding them to the universal good.

She wrote in 1947: 'Always fix your gaze on the one Father of many children. Then look upon all creatures as children of the one Father. Always go beyond every limit set by human nature with your thoughts and the affection of your heart and constantly strive, because this has become a habit, for universal fraternity in one Father: God'⁹. If God is the basis - the method of dialogue that Chiara teaches can only be love. It is a dialogue among brothers and sisters. A dialogue supported and strengthened by mercy, by compassion, by charity. It is a dialogue that makes us discover every kind of diversity as a gift. Chiara said, 'Whoever is close to me has been created as a gift for me and I have been created as a gift for whoever is close to me'¹⁰: This is her message for a world of fraternity.

Rita Moussallem and Antonio Salimbeni
Coordinators of the Centre for Interreligious Dialogue
of the Focolare Movement

⁹ Chiara Lubich, *The Art of Loving*, Città Nuova, Roma, 2005, p. 29.

¹⁰ Cf. Maria Voce, Malta 2017, 40th anniversary of the Diocesan Ecumenical Commission in https://www.focolare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Emmaus_-dialogo-e-dialoghi.it_.pdf

Activities & project with Islam
p. 38

Activities & project with Buddhism
p. 44

Focus: The 40 years of a school
for oriental religions
p. 40

Dialogue means to become "world men"

Dialogue means loving, giving what we have inside out of love for the other, and then also receiving and being enriched.

This is dialogue: to become, as our Gen say, 'world men' who contain every person within themselves, and who have also been able to give of their own. Dialogue far exceeds tolerance (...).

Dialogue is something completely different, it is a mutual enrichment, it is loving one another, it is feeling that we are already brothers and sisters, it means already creating universal fraternity on this earth.

Chiara Lubich,
Question and answer,
Castel Gandolfo (Italy), 8 February 1998



Research centres
that are involved:

16

Sponsors:

11

Participants:

200

Euros raised:

60.000

Italy - India

A scientific marathon for solidarity

Two women. One Catholic and the other Hindu. Two doctors. One Italian and the other Indian. Two institutions, the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Rome (Italy) and the Shanti Ashram centre in Coimbatore (India). What unites them is an ideal: universal fraternity according to Chiara Lubich's spirituality. What strengthened their friendship was the pandemic. While the virus was claiming victims in both countries, Dr Kezevino Aram, paediatrician and president of the Shanti Ashram, a Gandhian development centre serving more than 100,000 children as well as women who want to try to become entrepreneurs, telephoned Antonia Testa, an associate professor of Gynaecology and Obstetrics at the Catholic University whom she met during a study conference in India. After months of lockdown, the Shanti Ashram was in serious financial difficulty, because of the challenges and extent of the pandemic, the impossibility of earning a living from its work and the small entrepreneurial projects that support it. 60,000 euros were needed as well as setting solidarity in motion beyond national and religious borders.

It is in this context that '*Marathon for Solidarity*' was born, a scientific marathon involving gynaecologists, researchers and professors of gynaecology who, in an eight-hour online and in-person programme, illustrated the results of their research and studies and offered top-level training to colleagues from all over the world. Sydney, Houston, Philadelphia, Sao Paulo, Prague and London are just some of the cities where research centres have joined the initiative in less than 24 hours. At the end of the first session, even Pope Francis wanted to offer his financial contribution to reach the goal that would enable the Shanti Ashram to continue its work locally. "The marathon was not just a fundraiser or a gesture of solidarity between colleagues," commented Dr Antonia Testa, "but for all of us it was an experience of generative reciprocity. Dr Aram gave us the gift not only of a need, but of a lifestyle and a model of leadership that has a worldwide dimension in its DNA, with a team that is a visible expression of universal fraternity".

Ivory Coast

A mosque and a chapel so as to pray on the university campus

Justin Nary, a priest of the Movement, parish priest and also chaplain at the Polytechnic University of Man focused the university's pastoral work on dialogue, realising that the students belonged to different religions and cultures. The university rector, a Muslim, and the

Catholic bishop decided to create two places of worship: an ecumenical chapel for all Christians and a mosque. Both Christian and Muslim students were present at the inauguration ceremony and blessing of the two sacred spaces. This was a witness to peaceful coexistence and acceptance, in a context plagued by divisions and discrimination. While maintaining separate worship activities and liturgies, the pastoral work is geared to raising awareness of the spirit of mutual help and a culture of fraternity, where joint conferences on the spirituality of the different religious communities present are planned, as well as cultural and sports activities. There are also academic seminars that encourage knowledge and acceptance of diversity.

Italy

A Pact of interreligious fraternity



On 17 December 2017 in Brescia, northern Italy, twenty-two associations representing civil society and the Muslim community signed together the 'Brescia Pact of Islamic-Christian Fraternity'. The pact, whose founders included the Focolare Movement, committed the associations who signed not only to oppose terrorism, but also to hold community moments of fraternity, friendship and for sincerely getting to know each other.

In 2020, two other religious realities of the city, the Sikhs and the Hindus, asked to be included in the pact, transforming the name of this forum of associations into the 'Brescian pact of interreligious fraternity'. The fifth anniversary of this forum, in 2022, was celebrated in the Gurudwara temple of the Sikh community, in whose garden an olive tree was planted, symbolising the common commitment to peace and fraternity. The value of marriage in the different religions was the theme of the meeting, which was studied in depth during the day. On the occasion of the 'International Day of Human Brotherhood', three meetings were also organised in towns near Brescia. When the war broke out in Ukraine, the pact members collected 2,000 euro, which were then handed over to Caritas (the body of the Italian Bishops' Conference that offers aid and support in emergency situations). Also the more than **40 associations** adhering to the Pact facilitated reconciliation on a local level, of Hindus and Muslims, whose relations had broken down after the clashes in India and Pakistan. The support of Sikh friends was crucial. The signatories of the Pact, in order to encourage mutual understanding, offered guided tours of the city, fraternity-oriented film screenings, and participation in the religious celebrations of each faith.

Activities & projects With Islam

France

The film 'Au-delà du dialogue - Beyond dialogue' is a 53-minute documentary film illustrating the experience of the Focolare Movement in Algeria, through interviews with Christians and Muslims and with the contribution of an Islamic theologian and a Catholic bishop. Released in early 2020 in partnership with KTO, the national Catholic television station, it faced a setback in its distribution plans due to the pandemic.

The initial promotion plan included screenings in public spaces followed by moments of dialogue on the relationship between religions. After a few months of silence, used to subtitle the film in English and dub it in Italian, the promotion project resumed online, and at the end of the pandemic emergency, there was a return to public screenings in dioceses, in Islamic-Christian dialogue events, in groups committed to overcoming barriers between faiths. The documentary is available free of charge on the official site and YouTube channel.

Au delà du dialogue

le film



Great Britain

The *Ahl Al Bait Society* and the local Focolare community in Glasgow organised a public screening of the film *The Letter*, the movie inspired by 'Laudato Si', Pope Francis' letter on the care of creation. Around **50 participants** divided into small dialogue groups and explored the impact of the climate crisis and the centrality of spiritual values as a source of inspiration for personal and community action in caring for the environment.

Austria

The Islamic-Christian *Cluster*, an event that has been repeated for about ten years in Sankt Gallenkirch, a small village in one of the Austrian Alpine valleys, brings together a small group of Christian and Muslim theologians for an exchange of reflections around themes inspired by Chiara Lubich's spiritual and mystical experience in 1949. The 2022 programme also explored the mystical experiences of Charles De Foucauld and St Francis of Assisi for the Christian tradition and those of Rūmī, and Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya, mystics of the Muslim tradition.

Wings of Unity

Wings of Unity, a pilot project for dialogue between Catholic Christians and Shia Muslims, is now in its tenth year. It was launched in 2016 as a result of the friendship between Professor Mohammad Shomali, a Muslim theologian and academic from Iran, his wife Mahnaz and the Focolare Movement, in particular, with Piero Coda, a prominent Italian Catholic theologian and former rector of the Sophia University Institute. The project takes place in residential conferences

and with periodic academic meetings held at the Sophia University Institute, as well as in England, Switzerland, Kenya, Canada and the United States. The meetings enable in-depth study of spiritual and theological aspects of the two faiths in order to foster understanding, trust and working together for fraternity. *Wings of Unity* alternates between holding sessions among academics and weeks for living unity for students of the two religions. Promoters of the project are the Sophia University Institute, the *Islamic Centre of England* which is in London, the *Risalat International Institute in Qum* (Iran) and the Centre for Interreligious Dialogue of the Focolare Movement. In 2022 one of the meetings was held at the Sophia Institute and one weekend was held at the Centre for Unity in Welwyn Garden City near London.



In 2022 one of the meetings was held at the Sophia Institute and one weekend was held at the Centre for Unity in Welwyn Garden City near London.

Italy

"In the same boat" is the title of the national Islamic-Catholic meeting that took place in June on a ship bound for the island of Lampedusa (Italy), the arrival point for thousands of migrants from Africa heading for Europe by crossing the Mediterranean Sea: a sea that has become a tomb for many Africans. The event was attended by diocesan delegates for interreligious dialogue, leaders of Islamic communities in Italy and two delegates from the Focolare Movement. The initiative is the result of a process of dialogue that began in 2019, with a meeting at the Grand Mosque in Rome on the theme of 'Citizenship: rights and duties, diversity and equality'. The next stage, in 2021, was held in Loppiano, in the little town* of the Focolare Movement, with a meeting on safeguarding the environment in the spirit of the document on Human Fraternity, signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Ahmad al-Tayyib, in 2019.

* Little towns. Small formation centres with schools, places of worship, but also shops, art studios, small businesses, where members of the Movement, and others, spend periods of time being formed in the spirituality of unity through courses, work and social activities with an international and interreligious dimension.

Courses on:

Buddhism, Islam,
Hinduism, Confucianism,
Taoism, Shamanism

48**5 Countries involved:**

Philippines, South
Korea, Japan, Hong
Kong, Thailand

5**Participants:****6.300****Philippines****The 40 years of a school for oriental religions**

The School for Oriental Religions (S.O.R.) was founded in the Maria-polis Pace, a little town of the Focolare Movement in Tagaytay (Philippines) in 1982, by Chiara Lubich, during her first trip to Asia. The S.O.R. organises bi-annual courses that form the members of the Focolare throughout Asia to dialogue in a special way with the members of the different religious traditions. Since 1983, the School has offered 48 courses on Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Confucianism, Taoism and Shamanism in the Philippines, South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong and Thailand with over 6,300 participants. For its training programmes, S.O.R. is a recognised partner of the Episcopal Commission for Interreligious Dialogue of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines. The school also collaborates with the Offices of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences for Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue, for Education and for Human Development. Those who have participated in one of the S.O.R. courses think of it as similar to the Agora of ancient Greece: a public square, a safe place to openly discuss the challenges and problems that arise in the various cultural and religious contexts of Asian countries. The methodology inspired by the spirituality of unity of the Focolare Movement provides, alongside academic training, ample space for sharing testimonies. The courses promoted by the S.O.R. are considered a sort of antidote to all forms of fundamentalism and prejudice against members of the various faiths.

Nigeria

In Abuja, Nigeria's capital, as in other cities of the country, more than three million people have had to leave their homes to live as internally displaced persons in refugee camps, even around the capital itself because of the terrorist group *Boko Haram* which has been operating in the north of the country. Many of the displaced are Muslims and they are living in poverty, partly because the government does very little to support them. Those living in these camps do not plan to return to their hometowns precisely because of the constant instability. A young aid worker, of Muslim faith, looks after the residents' health care and needs, and members of the Focolare have collected medicines and basic necessities for distribution. Interreligious dialogue in Nigeria is not easy, especially with Muslims coming from territories controlled by *Boko Haram*. If some of them approach Christians, they are threatened with death and become victims of intolerance, prejudice and discrimination. The dialogue of the members of the Focolare with the guardian of the camp and with the benefi-

ciaries of the project is made up of friendship, of exchanges of good wishes during the festivals of the two religions, but also of concrete solidarity when it comes to responding to the needs of the refugees and without any intention of proselytising.

Ivory Coast

The Focolare Movement's school of inculturation in Africa organized a seminar in Nairobi on the theme of *leadership* in political, cultural and religious institutions. It was held in person and on line. At the same time, a meeting was held in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. This was attended by some village chiefs, a representative of the mayor, a linguistics scholar, a Catholic priest and an Imam, together with other religious leaders. They discussed the role of authority not only in the different fields of human life, but also in the different languages of the country. A reporter from the Ivorian National Radio chaired the meeting. The event was broadcast on television as well as on the radio.

USA

After a year of online meetings to get to know each other better, a group of millennials (young people between 30 and 40 years old) from the *American Muslim Society* and the Focolare Movement, in preparation for the 25th anniversary celebrations of the Pact made between Chiara Lubich and Imam W. D. Mohammed in the Malcolm Shabazz Mosque in Harlem, met in person in the African-American neighbourhood of New York to plan for the future.

NextNow the interfaith team that was formed from this meeting, created monthly virtual podcast-style programmes called *Around the Word of Life*, focusing on passages of Christian Scripture and the Koran. As the months went by, the young audience asked to add to their reflection on each other's scriptures a space for open dialogue on faith. The first one dealt with the topic "Spirituality and Science: the role of Artificial Intelligence", with four expert guests, two from each community.

Another initiative is to hold two annual workshops within two major events organised by the respective communities. The first one entitled 'Interfaith Dialogue and Racial Impartiality: How Faith in Action Encourages a More Inclusive Culture' took place during the Focolare Movement's cultural forum in San Antonio, Texas; the next was held in New Jersey at the end of 2023 on the theme *A Time to be Grateful*.

Italy

"I will fulfil my good promise" is the title of the biblical meeting that took place in Saluzzo, led by the Chief Rabbi of Turin and a Catholic biblical expert. **About 90 participants** took part in this first initiative of a meeting between representatives of the two religions, organized with the support of the local community of the Focolare Movement.

United States

In collaboration with the Jewish chaplain Michael Goldman, *Georgetown University's Campus Ministry*, led by Amy Uelmen, a focolarina and legal researcher, began offering several opportunities to deepen Jewish-Christian dialogue. This included bi-weekly study of the Torah and the use of a method of studying the *Hevruta* text to help the staff explore the ethics of speaking and listening. With the help of Giovanna Czander, a biblical scholar from the Focolare Movement, the Georgetown team used an interactive round table discussion to bring together religious leaders and students. They addressed concerns about the growing incidents of anti-Semitism, offering the academic community as well as members of religious communities, dialogue-based approaches to complex biblical texts.

The multidisciplinary volume *The Pharisees* (in Italian *I farisei*, Milan 2021) presents, from a historical, theological and pastoral point of view, the role of the Pharisees and the prejudices that have developed around them over the centuries. This volume was edited by academics Joseph Sievers, (member of the Focolare Movement and collaborator since 1996 of the Centre for Interreligious Dialogue) and Amy-Jill Levine.

A panel discussion on the text entitled *The Pharisees: What We Don't Know Can Hurt Us* was held in Washington at *Georgetown University*. It was sponsored by the Law School and the *Berkley Centre for Religion, Peace and World Affairs* with the participation of the editors and Philip Cunningham, professor of theology and director of the Institute for Jewish-Christian Relations at *Saint Joseph's University* in Philadelphia. Another presentation of the book was held in New York at the *Jewish Theological Seminary*, in collaboration with the *Institute on Religion, Law & Lawyer's Work* at *Fordham University* and the *American Jewish Committee*.



Argentina

"Words of Hate / Words of Peace" is the series of meetings against polarisation and hate speech promoted by NetOne*, the multidisciplinary network of communicators inspired by the spirituality of the Focolare Movement. The first meeting was held in Buenos Aires at the Anne Frank Centre to analyse forms of violence linked to religion and the strategies put in place to protect against various forms of violence, in cases such as that experienced by the young Jewish girl, Anne Frank, during the Holocaust. The meeting was attended by people from Uruguay, Chile, Mexico and Spain.

Burkina Faso

"To know the other in order to dialogue better" was the title of the evening that the youth of the Focolare Movement and the Association of Muslim Students of the city of Bobo Dioulasso dedicated to the basic principles of the Muslim faith in order to establish dialogue with Christians and to defuse the inter-religious tensions that are harming the country. They are committed to meet annually during Ramadan.

* NetOne is an association of professionals, students, researchers and those working in the fields of communication and information technology, committed to presenting contemporary society and the new media and web phenomena with a 'dialogical' methodology.

Korea

Dialogue meetings between representatives of different religions take place every three months in order to alleviate the conflict and polarisation in the country. The meetings are held in Seoul and are organised by members of New Humanity Movement, of the Political Movement for Unity, the political expression of the Focolare Movement, of inter-religious dialogue of the Focolare Movement and of *Won Buddhism*, a modern form of Buddhism. Each meeting focuses on a theme: work, teaching, the relationship between men and women, relations between generations, politics. The aim is to create a free space for sharing different points of view, including religious ones, on the chosen theme and to emphasise the positive and common aspects on which it is possible to come together and be a community.

Japan

Following the coronavirus pandemic, the suicide rate among women has risen sharply, bringing to the surface a series of problems linked to the cultural change taking place in the country. Over the last ten years, in fact, the role of women in Japanese society has shifted from that of housewife to full-time worker who, at the same time, must still take care of the home and the family, at an unsustainable pace. This social problem prompted a group of women of different religions to set up the *CommuniHeart project*, a project for the prevention of female suicide that focuses on self-awareness, communication and community support. Promoted by *Religions for Peace Japan* in collaboration with a Catholic focolarina, the project designed a five-stage programme (life and happiness, relationships, communication, women and society and suffering) and has provided counselling to **20 young participants**.

Poland

For four months, four groups of young people from the Japanese Buddhist movement *Rissho Kosei-kai* took turns in a volunteer project to welcome 35 people displaced from Ukraine and staying in the Focolare Movement's little town in Trzcianka, north-west Poland. In addition to workshops for the children teaching Japanese calligraphy and origami, the young people carried out maintenance work in the structures, even cleaning up a playground. The *Rissho Kosei-kai* decided to finance the extension of the building, to be used for lessons in Polish language and knowledge of the country and its norms. Other displaced persons housed in the area were able to take advantage of the services provided by the project.



India

"I know I am vulnerable because I am 60 years old, I am old and I am surrounded by situations that put my life at risk". These are the words of Kala, a Hindu woman from Kurichi, a village on the outskirts of the city of Coimbatore. She is a widow and lives with her son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren in a small house. She runs a tiny grocery shop and the Covid-19 pandemic, together with her precarious health situation, has made her a person at risk. Kala sceptically attended an awareness session offered by the Gandhian *Shanti Ashram* and its International Centre for Child and Public Health (ICPH) in collaboration with the health campaign A Vaccine for All, sponsored by the Focolare Movement through its NGO, AMU. Having cleared up doubts and dispelled mistrust about vaccination Kala became the campaign's number 5,000 vaccinated person.

Chiara Lubich and Luce Ardente

Phramaha Thongratana Tavorn, a Thai Buddhist monk, met Chiara Lubich in May 1995, after a young Buddhist in contact with the Focolare had encouraged him to get to know her. In 1996, the monk, together with Ajahn Thong, Grand Master of Theravada Buddhism, spent time in the Claritas spirituality centre in the little town of Lopiano to learn more about the spirituality of unity.

In 1997 it was Chiara Lubich who went to Thailand to visit the Buddhist monasteries led by the Grand Master. Here she met again the monk Phramaha Tongrattana Tavorn, also known as Luce Ardente precisely because of the zeal with which he spreads the experience of dialogue lived with the Focolare Movement in all the gatherings to which he is invited. During a visit to the city of Chiang Mai, home to several monasteries, Chiara spoke to Buddhist monks and nuns about her experience and the possibility of continuing to work together for the good of the human family.

The correspondence between the monk and the foundress of the Focolare Movement is rich, as are the meetings in which their common commitment to unity is strengthened. Since April 2004, several academic symposia have been held in Italy and Asia, between Christian representatives of the Focolare Movement and Buddhists of different currents, both Theravada and Mahayana. August 2022 marked the 25th anniversary of the opening of the first focolare in Chiang Mai, the fruit of this deep friendship between representatives of the two religions.

**Meetings****The Holy Land**

Ammim in Hebrew means the "miracle of the peoples" and it is the name of a small village in Northern Galilee, built precisely to foster dialogue between Jews, Christians and Muslims, a territory that still today and for over 70 years has experienced injustice, conflict and constant tension. In this place of dialogue, the Focolare Movement organised "Dare to care for a Better Future", a two-day meeting, from 16 to 18 September, where people from different ethnic groups and religions, including people of non-religious convictions, were able to meet, learn about each other's faith and culture in order to break down barriers of mistrust and suspicion and to dare to care for those labelled as enemies by the complex situation in the country.

Hong Kong

Here there is an annual study programme for Catholic diocesan priests on the interreligious dialogue of the Focolare Movement, with testimonies on the development of dialogues with the six religions present in the diocese over the last 40 years.

Argentina

Ikuméni is the name of the training workshop for young Christians, who, at the end of the educational course, oriented towards fraternity, are able to develop community leadership skills. They can implement good ecumenical and interreligious practices where they live as part of the development and peace processes that are underway.

Spain

In Murcia, an interreligious prayer of Creation was held with representatives of the Catholic Church and believers from the Islamic and Bahá'í communities.

Dialogue **with Cultures**

3 **The variety of thoughts and values expresses humanity**

The cultural crisis we are currently experiencing is taking place in the context of a historical transition towards new paradigms that are able to give voice to the complexity of the world, and to its social, technological and political challenges. Against this backdrop, inspired by the spirituality of unity, currents of thought in the various cultural fields and which are focused on dialogue are being explored and studied in depth.

Academic and professional groups for study and exchange of ideas, as well as congresses, seminars, forums, workshops, held in different countries become cultural creative places where the paradigm of unity generates diversity, wide-ranging and open discussions, a perspective inclusive of the past and present. These contributions link the field of academics to the existential everyday life of individuals and communities who use these cultural instruments to understand and address unexplored and longstanding situations with no prospect of a solution.

The fragmentary nature of knowledge, ideas and thinking itself, which makes cultures closed, antagonistic, sometimes enemies, demands a culture of unity and not uniformity, where the variety of thought and values expresses the richness of the human person, their dignity, their openness to transcendence and relationship: a cultural dynamic in dialogue capable of creating and fostering encounter and collaboration, in the name of humanity and of our planet. Culture, for Chiara Lubich, has the broad meaning of everything that is a reflection on human actions and thinking, on its history and future prospects, in dialogue with the patrimony of categories and values of the various disciplines to understand and respond to the challenges of the contemporary world. Culture is an 'existential project' that enlightens the mind, makes the heart beat faster and is embodied in daily action.

Art (Clartè), Pedagogy (EdU), Law (CeD), Ecology (EcoOne), Sport (Sportmeet), Economy (EoC), Sociology (Social-One), Medicine (Health Dialogue Culture), Architecture (Dialogues in Architecture), Politics (MPPU), Psychology (Psy-Com), Communication (NetOne); these are the most active areas of dialogue with contemporary culture within the Focolare Movement and are often described with the term: inundations.

At the roots: **Inundations** p. 53

Activities & projets: **Digital Oath-Giuramento digitale** p. 59

Focus: Dialogue with people of non-religious convictions p. 61

Catherine Belzung and Osvaldo Barreneche
Coordinators for the Centre for Dialogue with Culture of the Focolare Movement

Love is capable of becoming dialogue

Jesus asks us for a love that is capable of dialoguing with other people, that is, a love that, far from arrogantly closing ourselves off within our own little circles, wants us to be open to everyone and collaborate with all people of good will, so as to build together peace and unity in the world.

(...) Let us try to open our eyes to the neighbours we meet and admire the good they do, no matter what their beliefs might be; may they feel our solidarity with them and may we encourage one another to pursue the path of justice and love.

Chiara Lubich,
Word of Life September 1991, in *Words of Life*,
New City, Rome, 2017, p. 484.



Young participants:

574

Countries involved:

(Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, South Sudan, Kenya, Uganda)

7

Local projects:

93

People involved:

9.200

Africa

A new model of leadership

Leadership is not just a political or corporate job. Leadership is a calling for all members of a community and is a concrete model of participation and development, capable of bringing about great changes in a society. This is the leadership model proposed by *Together for a new Africa* - Insieme per una nuova Africa, the three-year training programme designed and run by young people from 14 African countries, members of the Focolare Movement or who are linked to its spirituality.

The mission of the project is to educate to a governance of responsibility and common good, so as to respond to the key challenges of the African continent. Peace Sabano was nominated as one of Uganda's 40 leaders under 40 in 2022. A human resource expert and talent scout, Peace founded the 'Amani Foundation Africa' for the welfare of children and their access to quality education. Engaged in awareness-raising campaigns for the protection of children, she travelled to Tanzania to teach English and take care of an orphanage in the capital Dar-es-Salam. The 'Give a Shoe and Save a Child' campaign, which she initiated to raise funds for education, has enabled dozens of rural children in the Luwero district to be able to attend school.

"One of the key concepts learnt during the "*Together for a new Africa*" training was the Golden Rule: 'Do to others what you would like to be done to you'. I think about this principle every single day when I make decisions, whether for my home or in my relationships at work, and I ask myself: would I make the same decision knowing that it will also have an impact on me afterwards?" the young Ugandan explains. "For Peace, being an African leader today means not waiting for others from another continent to solve problems or come and bring solutions, but rather for every African to take responsibility, in their own context, and be a leader of change. *Together for a New Africa* has made me realise that whatever we do has an impact and it is never small because it can generate a far more powerful ripple effect." In 2023, *Together for a New Africa* begins a second three-year period.



Cuba

DAB, when art rhymes with dialogue

Exhibitions, performances, theatre and dance presentations, **21 conferences, 24 workshops, more than 100 registered participants and 50 participants** who completed the entire training course. These are the statistics of an international and interdisciplinary project called DAB (Dentro e Attraverso la Bellezza - Inside and Through Beauty), now in its second season, where Art becomes the synthesis of a life experience where the physical-spiritual, social-relational and communicative dimensions of the person create beauty and enhance the uniqueness of his or her talents. In DAB's workshops, philosophy, aesthetics, and manual skills make it possible to experiment, create, and build artistic projects, and to train artists or simply lovers of humanity capable of dialogue and collaboration beyond cultural, demographic, and professional differences. The course lasts from 3 to 12 months, in collaboration with universities, academies, embassies and is aimed at young people up to 35 years of age.

Living Peace: 10 years and a million changemakers

In 2022 *Living Peace International*, a peace education programme that uses the Cube of Peace* to build fraternal relationships in schools, communities, and organisations turned 10. Founded in Egypt in 2012, it involves **over a million young people, youth and children in 130 countries around the world. About 1,700 schools** have joined the peace activities proposed by the Cube of Peace and inspired by Chiara Lubich's Art of Loving; and over 80 international organisations have joined the peace network that has been developed by *Living Peace*.

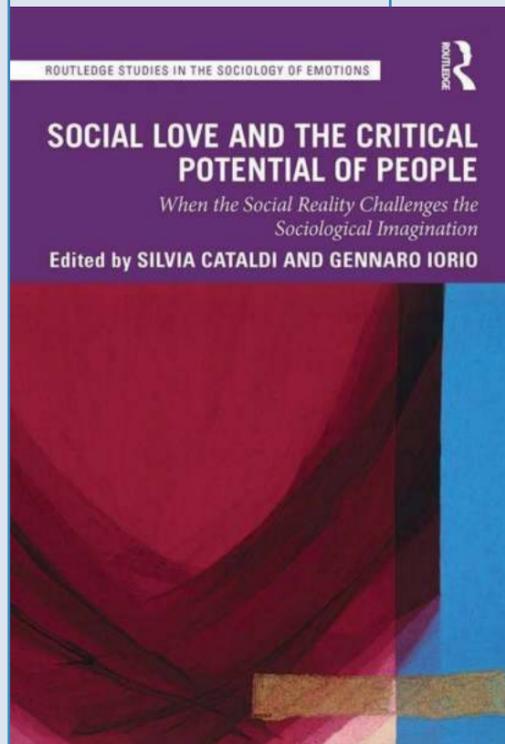
* The cube of peace is a cube on whose faces are printed phrases inspired by Chiara Lubich's Art of Loving, inviting us to build peaceful relationships in everyday life and with everyone.

3.1 **Activities & projects**
Sociology

"*Social Love and the Critical Potential of People*" is the title of the book, published by the British publisher *Routledge*, which brings together essays by sociologists of different cultural and religious affiliations on the value of love as a social category.

Adopting an interdisciplinary perspective, the book offers both theoretical and empirical reflections arising from a path of dialogue and research over many years, conducted by sociologists close to or belonging to the Social-one network, an international group of researchers in the social sciences and social service who are inspired by Chiara Lubich's charism of unity.

The essays in this volume, based on extensive research conducted with methods that consider both quality and quantity, above all in Europe and the Americas, show that love is not only central to human experience, but can help interpret and intervene in social problems such as climate change, poverty, xenophobia and the post-Covid crisis.



At the roots

Inundations

On 7 May 1998, during a trip to Argentina and Brazil, Chiara Lubich wrote a letter to the entire Focolare Movement in which she explained that the social realities that have blossomed from the spirituality of unity have tangible implications in the economic, political and developmental fields, but are also the bearers of a new culture capable (once formulated and consolidated) of entering into dialogue with contemporary society and with the different professional worlds. This marked the start, within the Movement, of the dialogue with contemporary culture, known as 'Inundations'. The term was inspired by an analogy used by John Chrysostom, a Church father, who compared Christian wisdom to a river slowly inundating all human realities.



Paraguay

'Mental health, our responsibility' is the title of the meeting of 60 students from the Catholic University of Asuncion and health experts, promoted by the international network Health Dialogue Culture (HDC), inspired by the spirituality of the Focolare Movement. The theme of the meeting was the mental health of health workers. At the end of the meeting, an interest group was formed, that is continuing to work on the subject.

Spain

The 'Workshop on Humanisation for Health Care Workers' promoted by the international network *Health Dialogue Culture* (HDC), which brings together scholars from different social and health care disciplines and teaches health care workers how to tackle the causes of patients' social and personal distress and to prevent the threats, revenge, violence and even attempts at corruption to which workers in the health sector are subjected.

Italy

An 'Ethical Charter of Patients' Rights' was drawn up at the conclusion of the Congress promoted by the international network *Health Dialogue Culture* (HDC). The scientific-theoretical and practical contributions of the conference were summarised in a series of recommendations to implement patient-centred care paradigms in healthcare systems. The aim of HDC is to share best practices among nations with different standards of care, to ensure equity and accessibility to health services, both locally and globally.

Activities & projects
Economy

* Economy of Communion is an economic model that involves entrepreneurs, workers, managers, consumers, savers, citizens, scholars, economists in promoting an economic practice and culture characterised by communion, gratuitousness and reciprocity.

Italy

Seminar organised by the Economy of Communion (EoC)* and the Italian Association of Entrepreneurs for an Economy of Communion (AIPEC) in Caltanissetta to increase awareness of social entrepreneurship and civil economy among the new generations, where profit can be social and directed towards the wellbeing of the community.

In Trent the EU BEST project was presented - a modular platform to help companies, organisations, institutions to undertake a path of social and environmental sustainability in the region.

Spain

A panel on labour reform, promoted together with other movements to call on the government to defend the dignity of workers and to ensure social justice.

Kenya

The 2nd Pan-African Congress of the EoC, entitled *A step ahead towards an expression of the values of African companies*, welcomed to Nairobi **90 young entrepreneurs, economists, and students from 17 African countries**. The objective was to explore creative social business models, geared towards company and community growth, with transparent financial management that does not succumb to the blackmail of widespread corruption, suffered by various regions of the continent.

Cameroon

In March, the seventh *Entrepreneurship & Academy Fair* was held at the Catholic University of Buea: an enterprise fair inspired by the principles of the Economy of Communion.

In April, at the AECAC (Action for the Economy of Communion in Central Africa) business hub, ten young people were able to launch their entrepreneurial projects to revitalise the local economy. The new start-ups deal with processing local cocoa, creating soaps from plants, solar-powered telephone charging systems, as well as various activities in the food and livestock sectors.

Dance

In Bethlehem (Holy Land), the "Harmony Among Peoples" project brings together around 150 children and young people each year on a summer *campus* for workshops in dance, music, singing and artistic expressions. In collaboration with the DanceLab Armonia Cultural Association, an expression of the Academic Dance Laboratory of Montecatini Terme (Italy), in a context marked by numerous conflicts and violence, this "workshop of the arts" offers pathways of beauty and hope to the young generations of Bethlehem.



Music

An online music composition workshop, organised with the Italian association *Forme Sonore*, was attended by more than 100 Gen 4, the boys and girls who live the spirituality of unity of the Focolare Movement, together with the animators of their groups from various countries of the world.

Cinema

A short film on ecology made by the Teens for Unity of the Focolare Movement in Amman, Jordan, won in one of the sessions of the Middle East Film Festival. The proceeds of the prize was used, by the young people themselves, to buy school supplies to be donated to a school on the outskirts of the city.

Painting

The Cathedral of Saints Michael and Gudula in Brussels (Belgium) hosted the art exhibition *God the Merciful* by the artist Michel Pochet. His unframed paintings, made on unbleached linen, old tablecloths or sheets, depict faces and symbols, recalling parables and characters from Scripture in their encounter with God's mercy: a God who weeps with mankind in the face of tragedies and wars.



Italy

The *Sophia Web Academy* has been inaugurated. It is an e-learning platform that extends Sophia University Institute's academic courses on the culture of unity to students of all ages, countries and educational backgrounds.

Columbia

'University, Knowledge and Wisdom: A Perspective for Latin America' is the title of the academic workshop that took place in Tocancipá to discern about opening a branch of the Sophia University Institute in Latin America.

Italy

The international seminar 'The Dignity of the Person and the Challenges of the Era of Artificial Intelligence', promoted by the network of lawyers connected to Communion and Law, in collaboration with *Sophia Centre for Research in Politics and Human Rights (PHR)*, discussed which paths the algorithms, Artificial Intelligence and robotics will offer to law and the safeguarding of human rights.

USA

The Institute of *Religion, Law and Lawyer's Work* of Fordham University, New York, inaugurated a series of seminars on 'New Frontiers of Human Rights' in cooperation with the Centre for Research in Politics and Human Rights of the Sophia University Institute (Italy) and the Human Rights Observatory of the University of Valladolid (Spain). Themes of the seminars were the right to peace, to freedom of religion, to a healthy environment. Two other meetings focused on the processing of immigrants at the borders and on transhumanism: new challenges in the defence of human rights.

Argentina

The Latin American Centre for Learning and Solidarity Service (CLAYSS) celebrated its 20th anniversary with **20 conferences in 20 cities across Asia, Europe, Africa and South America**. Apprenticeship and Solidarity Service is a training methodology suitable for all age groups that teaches how to use the knowledge acquired in the classroom to transform the surrounding reality. The aim is to learn from life all that cannot always be learned in the classroom and put it at the service of the people in the region. The Centre, inspired by the spirituality of the Focolare Movement, is involved in an international congress with more than 100 universities around the world in 2023.

Guatemala

'Educa' is a project that offered **25 young Guatemalan women** advanced computer training in programming and web page design. Some of the participants, who are of indigenous origin, pledged to put the knowledge they acquired at the service of the women of their communities to help them improve in their handicraft and small business activities.

France

The *Fratern'Aide* association, in partnership with ODAS (National Observatory of Social Action), presented the "Cube of Fraternity" at the first Day of Citizenship and Fraternity, to promote the concepts of citizenship and fraternity, the value of civic commitment and social relationships, inspired by the Focolare spirituality. The cube, on each of its 6 faces, had sayings inviting people to build fraternity. A "Cube of Fraternity" was sent to the President of the French Republic, his wife, the Minister of Education and various mayors.

Digital Oath - Giuramento digitale

The Digital Oath is the set of guiding principles and ethical guidelines drawn up by a group of Information Technology professionals and inspired by the spirituality of unity, to encourage the creation of digital systems that respect human rights and ecosystems. In partnership with Sophia University Institute, NetOne and the NGO New Humanity, they will work to create a partnership between research centres, technology companies, media, as well as international institutions working for a more ethical digital world.

Congo

The role of the journalist and spokesperson in the handling of information for the public before, during and after elections' was the theme of a conference on communications held in Kinshasa in the run-up to the 2023 elections, which has already caused unrest and violence in many areas of the country. The conference brought together around the same table the network of communicators linked to NetOne, the Catholic University of Congo (DRC), the network of journalists of the Episcopal Conference and the Church of Christ in Congo, various members of religious denominations such as the Kimbaguists, exponents of the Muslim world and of the Bahá'í, as well as young activists. On line there were also communicators from Benin, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Nigeria. The aim was to invite media representatives to encourage peace, dialogue and fellowship between peoples.

Brazil

Various hybrid meetings with communication academics and media professionals on the topics of disinformation, digital culture, and the impact of technology on the info-sphere.



Croatia

“Climate Change, Initiatives of Citizens and people in authority” is the two-day event that the city of Križevci, in cooperation with the Association for an Economy of Communion, has been offering for four years as a meeting place for organisations and civil initiatives which encourage cooperation and collaboration for the good of the community. The theme for 2022 was climate change. In collaboration with EcoOne*, the effects of rising temperatures, the use of fossil fuels for economic growth and the urgency to change lifestyles and habits were discussed. One of the workshops, in collaboration with the Laudato Si Movement, was dedicated to sustainable financing for the green development of local communities.

Awards

“One city is not enough. Chiara Lubich, citizen of the world” is an Italian national competition which awards prizes to young people in schools who wanted to learn about the person of Chiara Lubich and her commitment to building fraternity and dialogue among peoples. The competition, for the third year running, was promoted by the Chiara Lubich Centre in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Merit, the Fondazione Museo Storico del Trentino and New Humanity, an NGO of the Focolare Movement.

*EcoOne, network of experts and enthusiasts of the care of creation and of environmentally sustainable development

Focus

Dialogue with people of non-religious convictions

Partners:

University of the Aegean (Greece), Sophia University Institute of the Focolare Movement, Transform! Europe, Rosa-Luxemburg Foundation, Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education, Spanish and Austrian universities.

Initiatives:

Publication of the book *Europe as a Common. Exploring a transversal social ethics*. Summer school “Europe as a Common”.

Participants:

54

European countries:

20

DIALOP

Marxists, socialists and Christians for a shared social ethics

A project of dialogue between socialists, Marxists and Christians, involving intellectuals, academics, politicians, activists and students from different European countries is at the heart of DIALOP. The idea for this workshop matured following the private audience Pope Francis granted, on 18 September 2014, to Alexis Tsipras, leader of the Greek Radical Left coalition (Syriza), to Walter Baier, Austrian politician and president of the Party of the European Left, and to Franz Kronreif of the Focolare Movement. The four of them discussed the environmental crisis and the global social crisis and in conclusion the Pope suggested starting a project of transversal dialogue, capable of involving broad sectors of society and especially young people. The aim of the project is to develop common commitments to peace, non-violence, social justice, democracy and ecological transformation.

This dialogue platform has developed an experimental methodology based on two principles: qualified dissent and differentiated consensus. Qualified dissent is achieved by pooling and analysing the respective points of view that are rooted in the past of the various traditions, trying to clarify meanings of words and concepts used. In this way, apparent consensus, superficial and false misunderstandings are avoided. Dissent must be qualified, i.e. clear, certain, comprehensible, well-founded. This dissent stimulates the search for common visions and points of action and then allows a differentiated consensus to be reached, especially on social ethics. This means formulating simple, clear assertions that are fully shared by all participants in the dialogue session.

In 2022, several initiatives have emerged within the process. In June, the first *DIALOP Research Seminar* was organised, a three-day event in which Christians and Marxists exchanged views on transversal social ethics. In November, the document ‘In Search of a Common Future in Solidarity’ was presented at the European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium, offering suggestions for reflection and action inspired by a common social ethic. In December, on the eve of the first peace negotiations between Ukraine and Russia, DIALOP launched a petition with over 650 signatures calling for a ceasefire. The signatures were delivered to the Russian and Ukrainian embassies in Vienna.

Uruguay**To live for fraternity through the Idea of the Month**

Since the origins of the Focolare Movement, members and people close to the spirituality of unity have committed themselves to living a sentence from the Bible in their daily lives, chosen monthly and accompanied by a commentary that proposes examples and ways of putting it into practice for people of faith.

The dialogue between believers and people without a religious reference who belong to the Movement in Uruguay gave rise to 'The Idea of the Month', a secular commentary on the Word of Life, addressed especially to those who have no faith and are in search. In 2014, Adán Calderara, a Uruguayan mechanic, member of the Focolare Movement and passionate intellectual of the Social Doctrine of the Church, had the idea of identifying civil and social values, inspiring ideas of fraternity linked to the biblical phrase.

Today, the Idea of the Month is translated into 13 languages, distributed worldwide and put into practice by groups of people belonging to different faiths and religions and also by people inspired by universal values.

The animators of the AFAGO SP association in São Paulo, Brazil, at the forefront in caring for about 300 children and adolescents in socially vulnerable situations meet, every month, with both employees and the children they assist to read the Idea of the Month, comment on it and exchange the good practices used in their daily lives. The children's version of the Idea is illustrated with drawings.

The **Barcelona** Focolare community has turned the meetings around the Idea of the Month, into a space for dialogue open also to non-believers, to reflect on local and global challenges. By encouraging each other to live the Idea in our daily lives, we commit ourselves to making humanity a family.

At the roots**Dialogue
with people
of non-religious
convictions****"Secular holiness" as a service to humanity**

Chiara Lubich has always been close to people without a religious reference. In her own family there were those who were particularly sensitive to a religious experience and those who were motivated by other ideals focused on the multiple social dimensions of people. This closeness, this unconditional love for that part of humanity that lives without God opened her heart and that of the Focolare members to people of good will, who follow their conscience and with whom we share values such as solidarity, peace, tolerance, justice, freedom and honesty. Without this broad portion of the world, the Charism of unity, 'that all may be one' which has always guided the actions of Chiara and all of us would not be complete.

Active dialogue with people without a religious faith is constitutive of the Focolare Movement and as early as 1978 led to the opening of the 'International Centre for dialogue with people of non-religious convictions'.

Over the years there have been congresses and courses on religious and secular values that have increased the sense of fraternity and animated the most varied projects and meetings. Included in the Statutes of the Focolare Movement, friends of non-religious convictions want to follow a path of 'secular holiness'¹¹ at the service of humanity's deepest needs. Chiara herself reminded the members of the Focolare Movement of the inestimable value of this presence because "you don't know what, in God's plan, these people of good will can bring to you with their being the way they are, with the values that they have, that they believe in, and that you may need to enrich yourself with. You may be full of Christian doctrine, but you don't know what justice means, you don't know what fairness means, you don't know what, I don't know, a healthy economy means for the benefit of..., especially the poorest"¹².

The style of dialogue and the attention given to values and human rights developed by people of non-religious convictions underlie so many of the dialogues that the Movement has developed in the social and political spheres, in the many places in the world in which the spirituality of unity has spread.

Maria Àngels Capellas and Ferdinando Garetto
Coordinators of the Centre for dialogue
with people of non-religious convictions

¹¹ "The figure of Igino Giordani (co-founder of the Focolare Movement) introduces a dimension of modern holiness that includes everyone. Antonella Ornelli, in a conference on 3 April 2013 on Giordani and Chiara commented "Through the figure of Giordani, perhaps, I can glimpse a path towards a secular and civil 'holiness'".

¹² Chiara Lubich, , *Meeting with people of non-religious conviction*, Loppiano (Italy), 7 May 1995.

God cries out through the circumstances of the world today

We are witnessing in the world situation a breakdown of the social order, the huge growth of information and communication technologies, the emergence of unequal cultural models, a transition that, many times, interrupts the handing on of values and the experience of faith. This is a momentous change, even though there remains a thirst for God, a yearning for truth, a desire for peace, justice and, ultimately, happiness, together with a new sensitivity to the promotion and defence of human rights.

However, social and economic inequality remains a permanent challenge, widening the gap between the poor and the increasingly poor, while rising levels of hardship are leading to uninterrupted and unwelcome migration with painful consequences for families and communities.

In the spirit of synodality indicated by Pope Francis, the discernment of every suffering and need, cannot leave us indifferent, but becomes a real relationship with every neighbour, a launching pad to bring back to God that piece of our world that He has entrusted to us.

For Chiara Lubich, discernment is examining the situation in the light of the Gospel and the experience of God: this process ratifies its spiritual identity and recognizes its link with the sacred. God cries out from the circumstances of the world, because he is in the world, in his Creation made with and through Love. Each circumstance is unique and unrepeatable, with a complex diversity that can be understood and supported by a life permeated with spirituality and 'active goodness'. The great challenge is, therefore, to be able to translate the Good News once again by engaging in dialogue with the joys and hopes of humanity today. The following chapter will present projects and stories that have challenged the Focolare Movement to enter into dialogue and action in response to the many social emergencies of 2022.

Cristina Calvo

Economist, member of the international board of the Movement for Unity in Politics and New Humanity NGO

Stories: **Rebuilding lives displaced by the Anglophone crisis**

p. 66

Fields of Action
Dialogue: Wars

p. 73

Focus: **EcoPlan, the ecological project of the Focolare Movement**

p. 72

Fraternity relegates war to the history books

It is fraternity, in fact, that can make projects and actions flourish in the complex political, economic, cultural and social fabric of our world.

It is fraternity that brings people out of isolation and can open the door of development to peoples who are still excluded from it.

It is fraternity that shows how to resolve disagreements peacefully and can relegate war to the history books.

It is through fraternity lived out that one can dream and even hope for a communion of goods between rich and poor countries.

Chiara Lubich,

*"Liberty, equality... what happened to fraternity?";
London (Great Britain), 22 June 2004*



Young participants:

574

Countries involved:

(Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, South Sudan, Kenya, Uganda)

7

Local projects:

93

People involved:

9.200

Cameroon

Rebuilding lives displaced by the Anglophone crisis

Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon, has become a complex laboratory of social transformation following the so-called Anglophone crisis that brought thousands of internally displaced people from the north-west and south-west regions of the country to the city. In these areas, people have been fighting for autonomy from the central government since 2016. The search for greater security and stability has also relocated hundreds of internally displaced persons to Dschang and Bafoussam, towns that are struggling to adapt to the arrival of the new inhabitants.

In this context, the association *Action pour l'Economie de Communion en Afrique Centrale* (AECAC) promoted a project for the empowerment and socio-economic integration of these people, listening to their needs and also their dreams. During the financial and management training sessions, support was provided to enable newcomers to 'rebuild' their lives, their new identity and take care of basic needs such as keeping their homes and paying school fees for their children. One session of the programme was dedicated to socio-political training to re-educate the displaced people on the value of peace and the urgency of restoring it to the places of conflict from which they fled.

The 40 beneficiaries of the project now run several small businesses: they are tailors, hairdressers, barbers, shoemakers. A special feature of the course is the sharing of the participants' stories. Derrick was attending university when the crisis broke out, but in his new town he started a barbershop, which he wants to expand. Sonita is 18 years old and has stopped attending school since her arrival in Yaoundé. She works on designing traditional African clothes, but her dream is to go back to school and resume her education, with the money she has earned from her workshop. Bertila was studying to be a nurse before the crisis. With three small children and in a new city, she had to reorganise her life and open a business where she makes costume jewellery and home decoration accessories. The project enabled her to find a trainee position to complete her nursing training and achieve her dream.

Beneficiaries: 40

Perù

Peace begins by looking after our grandparents

"Our contribution to peace is to take care of the abandoned elderly people". This is the mission of the 'Chiara Lubich Centre for the Elderly', opened in Lámud, a city in the Peruvian Amazon, 2,330 metres above sea level. The centre was opened in the midst of the pandemic crisis and accommodates 50 elderly and lonely people. The house, furniture, crockery and even food came as a gift from the neighbouring community. It was a risk, not without difficulties and obstacles, but in March 2022 the centre celebrated its first anniversary, opening its doors to the city, with a party, where even the political authorities participated. The two-day celebration recruited new volunteers, adults and children, who want to take care of lonely grandparents, enlarging their families.

Germany

Music beyond the bars

"The words of these songs have helped me not to judge those who are different from me". "The stories in the songs are also about my past and that is why I do not feel alone with my pain. Now I know that other people with the same stories, with the same pain, have been able to find happiness again". "For a brief moment I came out of prison". These were some of the comments at the end of *Gen Verde's concert in the women's prison in Vechta, Germany, where this international band played for 70 female inmates. The music became a conversation between the musicians and the inmates without prejudice and barriers. The notes and lyrics became the tool for dialogue between stories of women, a space for encounter and dignity, without commiseration taking precedence over sharing and acceptance.

* Gen Verde is an international performing arts group made up of 19 artists from 14 countries.



The Culture of Giving

On 23 April 1992, Chiara Lubich, in a conference call to members of the Movement, encouraged the creation of a new culture, saying: 'The Word which could offer a remedy, which could give a balance to our planet, is that which invites us to give. (...)

We must bring about, increase the culture of giving. We should give our surplus or even what is necessary if our hearts tell us to do so. We should give to those who do not have, knowing that using our goods in this way will pay an immeasurable amount of interest, because our giving opens the hands of God.

Let's give always, let's give a smile, understanding and forgiveness, let's listen, let's give our intelligence, will, and availability; let's give our time, talents, and ideas (every idea is a responsibility), let's give our actions, experiences and capabilities, let's give our goods reviewed periodically to decide whether to keep them or give them to others, so that nothing accumulates and everything circulates. Giving: let this be the Word that gives us no respite'.¹³

¹³ Chiara Lubich, *Conversazioni in collegamento telefonico*, Città Nuova, 2019, pp. 448/451

Field of Action
Immigration

Breaking down barriers between Haiti and the Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic is a country in the middle of the Caribbean Sea that shares the territory of the island of Hispaniola with Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas. Political instability and internal violence have caused thousands of people to migrate to other countries and to the other half of the island, which is occupied by the Dominican Republic, creating a lot of tension. An estimated two million Haitians work in the Dominican sugar cane fields. For years, the Focolare community of La Romana has been working to create bonds with the new immigrants by trying to overcome the different barriers that separate the two peoples, first of all social discrimination, but also language: Creole for the Haitians and Spanish for the Dominicans. From this experience of getting to know the area of Batey, where many Haitians are confined, a project of social integration began, through job placements in the textile sector, a strong point of the city of La Romana. Sewing and tailoring courses began to enable migrants to work in a factory or set up their own business.

Gen Rosso with the refugees of Ušivak

Ušivak is a village in the town of Hadžići in Bosnia and Herzegovina and hosts one of the welcome centres for migrants travelling the Balkan route and hoping to reach the European Union by crossing the Croatian border. There are about **300 people regularly staying** at the centre. Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Iraq, several sub-Saharan African nations and even Cuba are among the most represented countries. The *Social Corner*, desired by Pope Francis and run by Caritas volunteers, offers temporary residents educational and recreational activities, but is also an oasis for the spirit and for instilling confidence in the future after traumatic journeys.

Gen Rosso, a music band inspired by Chiara Lubich's charisma of unity, has held several concerts there, also involving refugees. It organised training for the camp animators, to continue the experience of artistic workshops, which accompany the concerts and allow the new arrivals to experience a sense of belonging, hope, and human warmth.



Field of Action The Pandemic



An appeal and an international campaign

The appeal and campaign to raise awareness of access to treatment for those infected with the Coronavirus, called 'A Vaccine for All', was launched by the Political Movement for Unity, a political section of the NGO New Humanity, on the occasion of the G20 meeting in Rome. The campaign called for the periodic suspension of patents on vaccines to allow their production also in developing countries. More than **40 organisations signed the manifesto and over 60,000 euros** were raised to purchase infection prevention kits to be offered to the most vulnerable people, especially in the Amazon region of Pará (Brazil). In partnership with the hospital boat 'Barco Hospital Papa Francisco', which serves over 1,000 communities along the Amazon River, they reached the populations of the 'ribeirinhos' who live far away from health care centres.

Field of Action Economic Crisis

Lebanon

A humanitarian air bridge between Italy and Lebanon was set up by the Focolare communities living on opposite shores of the Mediterranean. The aim was to respond to the social and economic emergency that has hit the fragile stability of the Middle Eastern country, following the 2020 explosion in the port of the capital, Beirut. The appeal by the Latin Apostolic Vicariate of Beirut and the Vatican Apostolic Nunciature on the urgent need for medicine for the chronically ill and for powdered milk for newborn babies triggered a chain of solidarity that involved the Focolare Movement, the John Paul II Foundation and many of their friends, inaugurating in February 2022, an air bridge between the two countries that continues today.

Field of Action Ecology

Students participants:
8.000

Beneficiaries:
15.000

Italy

"Giving to protect the environment" is the education course on energy saving and integral ecology implemented by students from **39 Italian schools and 12 other institutions** in other countries. The Focolare Movement, in partnership with the Department of Earth Sciences of La Sapienza University in Rome and with the patronage of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Ecological Transition and the Italian Space Agency, has proposed a pledge against wasting energy. Students who sign up undertake to implement energy-saving actions, for each of which they receive a reward of 10 cents from one of their family members. This 'nest egg' pooled among all the classes of a school has financed a social garden in Nairobi, the planting of trees in a suburb of Mumbai, the creation of plant nurseries in a region of Haiti.

"Do the right thing!"

"Do the right thing!" is an exhibition on critical consumption and sustainable lifestyles, in which the EcoOne Italia network participated together with the Laudato Si Movement. In addition to a workshop, the network of experts and enthusiasts of the care of creation, inspired by the spirituality of the Focolare, at the end of the work, proposed to the school children to sign a **pact of responsibility for humanity and the planet**.

EcoPlan, the ecological project of the Focolare Movement



During the last General Assembly, in 2021, the Focolare Movement identified the care of creation as one of its priorities. In particular, the Movement pledged to review the lifestyle of its members and communities and to verify the ecological sustainability of its structures and activities. Strengthened by strategic partnerships with the Laudato Si Movement and FaithInvest, the Focolare has adopted the EcoPlan, an ecological plan drawn up by experts linked to EcoOne, (the ecological and cultural network inspired by the spirituality of unity). On 3 June 2022 during the Stockholm +50 climate conference, the EcoPlan was presented and officially handed over to Iyad Abu Moghli, senior principal advisor of UNEP, the UN environment agency, and director of the Faith for Earth Initiative. Together with the ecological plan, the "Seed Funding Program" was launched, a micro-financing programme that rewards the creation of integral ecological plans at local and national levels within the Focolare communities. In the first edition of the programme, 15 micro-projects were selected.

Field of Action Sustainable development

Burundi

Birashoboka means 'it can be done' in the Kirundi language. And precisely 'It Can Be Done' is the name of the project, sponsored by the NGO Action for a United World (AMU) and the Burundian association Casobu, to create community microcredit groups whose members can support themselves in developing new entrepreneurial activities. There are 450 groups supported with a total of about 10,500 members.

Field of Action Wars

Syria

The Syrian crisis, which began on 15 March 2011, has resulted in 6.7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), 6 million refugees in other countries and around 14 million people in need of all forms of assistance. International sanctions, the economic crisis, the pandemic and not least the earthquake have made the poverty conditions of the Syrian population even worse than during the years of armed conflict. The Focolare Movement's social projects NGO, Action for a United World (AMU), through its programme: *Emergency Syria - Signs of Hope* is caring for **440 families** in need of basic necessities, health care and housing.



The programme supports over **400 students** in schools in Damascus, Banyas and Homs and provides school and rehabilitation materials to **250 deaf pupils** at the EHIS institute in Aleppo. Medical support is provided to **77 people with amputation, disability or cancer**. Over **450 are beneficiaries of home physiotherapy** programmes.

Ukraine

Since March 2022, a few weeks after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the Emergencies Coordination of the Focolare Movement, together with AMU and AFN*, has collected more than 760,000 euros to be allocated to the welcome and assistance projects that Caritas Spes Ukraine, together with some members of the Focolare Movement, has set up for internally displaced people.

* Azione Famiglie Nuove (AFN) is an international nonprofit organization inspired by the spirituality of the Focolare Movement. It supports children and families around the world who live in conditions of vulnerability and poverty.

Food and aid for rebuilding, the setting up of shelters, initial medical assistance and psychological support are some of the services that have been offered. At the end of 2022, they were extended to Ukrainian refugees who had arrived in Slovakia and Poland and were offered accommodation by local families. Together with the diocese of Kamianets-Podilskyj, the Focolare's Emergencies Coordination has started the renovation of a day care centre for children, to offer educational and psychological support to both the little ones and their mothers. In the Kiev area, specific health care has been provided for residents and displaced people through a mobile clinic.



Field of Action Natural disasters

Pakistan

In the aftermath of the floods during the summer that killed more than 1,100 people, 33 million were displaced, a third of the country was submerged and many homes and buildings were destroyed. The Focolare Movement's Emergencies Coordination, together with AMU and AFN, has been active in ensuring the delivery of food parcels, clothing and health care products to about **500 families** in Nowshera locality in northern Pakistan, in Tando-Alla-Yar and Kotri, as well as in Sangar, Sindh district in the south of the country. In October, a group of Focolare members set up a medical camp in the village of Haji Hafiz Shah Goth, where doctors were able to visit more than 200 children, women and men, who had been unable to receive any medical care due to the floods.

Field of Action Human rights

"The power of caring: united against trafficking" was the title of the online prayer marathon held on Feb. 8, during the World Day of Prayer and Reflection against Human Trafficking. It was coordinated by the Talitha Kum network, the international anti-trafficking network that brings together more than 3,000 women religious who are committed at the forefront of this issue. The prayer involved partner associations around the world including the Focolare Movement.

Argentina

In Argentina, a Focolare member, Marcela Villares, who coordinates the work of the Commission for Migrants and Itinerant People, for the Argentine Bishops' Conference for the department concerning human trafficking, has designed a book of educational activities and games aimed at children ages 6 to 17 to help them understand the risks and how to prevent it. A group of AMU friends in Luxembourg, by twinning with the Diocese of Oran in northern Argentina, funded courses and training materials for four Catholic schools. The courses were also attended by principals of state schools in the area.

Field of Action Challenges and crisis in the family

Field of Action On the peripheries

Field of Action Social Justice

"No One Alone" is the title of the process of accompanying and sharing the life experiences of Focolare families from Italy, Portugal, Germany, Belgium and Brazil, whose children belong to the LGBTQ+ community. The workshop held in October 2022, at the Mariapolis Centre in Castel Gandolfo, Italy, was a particularly significant milestone. From this pioneering experience, other groups have developed in various locations in Italy and Latin America.

60 people were present

Between 2021 and 2022, the New Families Movement, a branch of the Focolare Movement dedicated to families, organised an online course for **330 couples from 54 countries** to provide specialised accompaniment for families and couples in difficulty, separated people and couples living in a new union after a separation.

Argentina

Some members of the Focolare community in the city of Rosario have started to collaborate and work with the Padre Misericordioso Community. For more than 10 years, this association has been present in the poorest neighbourhoods of the city, together with the 'Hogares de Cristo' network of Catholic priests whose parishes are located in these areas. The mission of all the associations is to offer proximity and rehabilitation to people who are victims of addiction, street life and violence. Substance abuse prevention programmes are offered in the Children's Centres, while the Life Centres deal more with adults and adolescents. The Rehabilitation Centres, on the other hand, welcome women, victims of violence, who are offered the opportunity to learn a trade, receive an education and participate in sports.

USA

After the murder of the African-American George Floyd on 25 May 2020 in Minneapolis, some members of the New York Focolare community embarked on a process of self-searching, education and study of the social injustices and systemic racism rooted in US society. It was a way of entering into the suffering and pain of black people that had been hidden for years; but also learning about the structural cultural prejudices of those belonging to the white community allowed them to initiate the 'Courageous Conversations' project. These are periodic workshops with experts, where through a guided dialogue we gained awareness of the discriminations that permeate the everyday life of people living in the USA.

Dialogue **in the Institutions**

5 **Dialogue is the key to inclusive politics**

To love the other's country as one's own is a great challenge, especially nowadays in which the prevailing norm is the protection of national interests. And yet this is still possible! Hundreds of testimonies, projects, experiences of political and institutional structures that are inspired by the spirituality of the Focolare Movement attest to this. These facts are a proof that religious groups or parties with different convictions or even opposing views can accept one another and can work together for the common good.

This dream of a political world and of institutions that are characterized by dialogue became a reality when young Africans rejected corruption and chose to become uncompromising leaders and peacemakers. It came true when members of the Korean parliament, belonging to different parties sought together the good of the country; it was realized when people from opposite currents of thought met in Europe and developed a new style of dialogue that enabled them to have a 'differentiated consensus' and a 'qualified dissent'.

If this is true for politics, it is also true for non-governmental organisations that are operating on behalf of the Focolare Movement within the international institutions. "Loving the other's NGO as one's own" is also a working method in these fields that are so full of challenges. Because of this conviction, we are working so that the voice of civil society can be heard in the UN, UNESCO, and FAO headquarters, and we collaborate with other NGOs precisely in order to be able to offer a rational, varied, but common contribution to the States represented in these forums.

Chiara Lubich, speaking at the UNESCO on 19 December 1996, said: "For anyone who sets out to move the mountains of hatred and violence today, the task is immense and heavy. But what is impossible for millions of people who are isolated and divided, seems to become possible for those who have made mutual love, mutual understanding and unity the essential motive of their lives'.

The root of Chiara's political dialogue also lies in this capability of welcoming the thoughts of others with kindness, of giving value to the positive in what the other says and brings, of offering one's point of view with detachment in a relationship of trust and friendship. And this is the key to building an inclusive and sustainable politics.

Chantal Grevin
Jurist, first representative of the NGO New Humanity at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris

At the roof: **Movement for Unity in Politics**
p. 78

Stories: **Forming leaders of unity and of common good**
p. 79

Focus: **Dialogue in the United Nations**
p. 82

Authentic politics is fraternity

This is the politics that is worth living, a politics capable of recognising and serving one's own community, one's own city and nation, and all the way to the whole of humanity, because fraternity is God's plan for the entire human family.

This is the true political authority that every country needs; power, indeed, gives strength, but it is love that gives authority.

Chiara Lubich,
"Freedom, equality... what happened to fraternity?";
London (Great Britain) 22 giugno 2004



Italy

An inter-parliamentary group to prevent school drop-out

In 2022, more than 83,000 Italian children failed at school because they did not reach the level of knowledge required for their respective classes. Most of them are part of the 12.7 per cent of school drop-outs, in contrast to the European average of 9 per cent. This short-coming in education puts Italy in the third place among EU countries where people leave school without obtaining a diploma. The Movement for Unity in Politics*, together with the Italian Teachers' Network and EdU, the association of educators inspired by the spirituality of unity, worked to set up a parliamentary panel on school reform. They invited parliamentarians, senators and delegates from the Italian Ministry of Education. Following a conference held in one of the halls of the Parliament, an inter parliamentary group was created to find solutions to the problem of school drop-out and poor education. The parliamentarians were requested to work for the prevention of possible further cuts in the budget for education, in order to put the main focus again on the children, and also to activate psychological assistance that would eventually lead towards considering school as a remedy to many social problems.

At the roots**Movement for Unity in Politics***

On 2 May 1996, in Naples, Italy, Chiara Lubich met with a group of people from the Focolare Movement who belong to different political parties. This marked the beginning of the Movement for Unity in Politics. Two years later, on 15 September 1998, in Strasbourg (France) when Chiara was asked how to aim at unity despite sometimes holding opposing positions, she replied that "first of all - before being politicians and thinking and working as such - they must have a great love, a great charity towards one another, and then be party activists. And this is certainly not in order to form another party, but rather to understand the other's motivations in a spirit of unity, while remaining loyal to one's own political affiliations; a spirit of unity that is lived not just in exceptional cases. Rather it must become a fundamental and continuous norm for the politics of every people and in the international context; a spirit of unity that helps to take common stands in order to safeguard human values"¹⁴.

Today, the Movement for Unity in Politics is an international network of politicians, diplomats, civil servants, administrators, academics and active citizens, who consider fraternity as a political category and a methodology that can be applied to legislative, governance and civil participation initiatives.

¹⁴ Chiara Lubich, *The political and social aspects of the Focolare Movement*, Nuova Umanità, 20 (1998).

Numbers of conference**Panel:****3****Listening point:**
in Africa, Europe, America**20****Cities linked up:****8****Participants:****300****General managers and company executives****50**

Congo

Forming leaders of unity and of the common good

"Congo is not an ill-fated country, but we must agree that it has not yet known its golden age, despite its innumerable resources. But there is a star in the firmament of Congolese education: the Ecoforleaders School". This was the opening statement of an article that the Badi-news news agency dedicated to Ecoforleaders, the formation school for leaders of communion, established by the Focolare Movement and recognised through a decree by Congo's Ministry of Higher and University Education. Its aim is to form multidisciplinary leaders who are attentive to the protection of human rights and of the Constitution and are committed to fighting corruption and tribalism, which are among the evils of Africa and of other continents. In this school young people are formed to help build inclusive, dynamic, co-responsible, and integral communities that are oriented towards dialogue and the common good. In November 2022, an international panel discussion was held in Kinshasa in the presence of church, political, academic and diplomatic dignitaries, including the Italian Ambassador Luigi Diodati. Representatives of the Confederation of Small and Medium Enterprises of Congo (COPEMECO), the National Association of Public Entities and State Property Companies (ANEP) and the National Institute of Professional Preparation (INPP) took part in the dialogue). Ecoforleaders, in collaboration with the Catholic University of Congo, the network of journalists of the Bishops' Conference and representatives of various denominations and religions, organised a course for journalists in preparation for the elections, encouraging everyone to be peacemakers and to respect the dignity of the person.

South Korea

A political forum for unity in Parliament

The 'Political Forum for Unity' is composed of parliamentarians whose actions are inspired by the Focolare spirituality and is officially recognised as a research group by the South Korean Parliament. It includes 10 to 15 members of Parliament belonging to the two main political parties and has been meeting regularly every two months for about 15 years. In 2022, in the presence of the President of the Parliament, the Political Forum for Unity celebrated the ninth anniversary of an award it gives to parliamentarians who speak in terms of peace, dialogue and respect during their term of office. Alongside this Political Forum, the 'Social Forum for Unity' has also been established. It brings together politicians, former parliamentarians, academics, lawyers, mayors, civil servants and citizens who periodically exchange views on burning issues that are facing the country. Aside from these forums a school of politics for young people has also been operating since 2010, holding weekly lessons to form future political leaders.



Estimated participation: **1.200**
Impact on: **10.000**

DialogUE

"DialogUE - Diverse Identities Allied Open to Generate a United Europe" is a project promoted by a group of 14 organisations that are based in 9 European Union (EU) member states. Through an innovative methodology of dialogue, 7 categories of citizens divided into identity groups related to faith (Christians of various churches and Muslim believers), to shared professed values (atheists and Marxists), and to geographical location (East and West Europe) come together. Each meeting highlights the variety of approaches to communication, to ecological issues, social policies, but also perspectives with a broad consensus, which are then recommended to EU policy makers. The project aims to strengthen the capacity of citizens to dialogue in a context of increasing polarisation. It also aims at generating awareness of the EU strategy documents and how to give an input, creating an intergenerational and gender-balanced dimension of European citizenship.

Conference on the future of Europe

Young people involved in the Movement for Unity in Politics presented the document "Europe, a frontier of peace against every barrier" at the Conference on the Future of Europe. Focusing on the theme of long-term migration and the solidarity-based management of influxes of people from the Mediterranean and Balkan routes, the document was signed by various associations from Italy and other countries. It was also published on the Conference website, which gathers the opinions and suggestions of European citizens on priority issues for the EU through an authentic participatory process.

Belgium

The Movement for Unity in Politics (MPPU) has inaugurated in Brussels a space dedicated to dialogue at the service of parliamentarians and civil society representatives who are working and are committed in the institutions of the European Union. The 'Centre for Dialogue and Peace' is an international laboratory for political innovation that looks to a Europe in peace, from the Atlantic to the Urals. The war in Ukraine, which is tearing apart the European continent with unimaginable atrocities, is making this joint undertaking even more urgent.

Italy

Concerned at the results of surveys showing an increase in the number of people who chose not to go and vote in the political elections of September 2022, the Focolare Movement, together with the associations ACLI and Catholic Action, launched the social campaign #Let's vote #I am voting", to encourage young people and to invite all citizens to reconsider voting as a right and a duty towards the country, as well as an essential element to protect democracy.

Ivory Coast

On 21 May, the University Institute of Abidjan hosted the first session of the school for inculturation entitled: '*Leadership: Autorité Gouvernance dans les Institutions Africaines, hier aujourd'hui et demain*'. It was attended by village chiefs, the representative of a mayor in the area, a priest from the Catholic Church, the Imam of a mosque, a representative of the Islamic religion, a linguistics student, a representative of the Focolare Movement, a journalist from the Ivorian radio, who also moderated the panel of speakers. The aim of the initiative was to start a discussion on leadership in the cultural and religious institutions of the past and the present. The relevance of the topic and the number of participants as well as those who followed the conference through radio and local television, prompted the organisers to schedule a second session on the theme.

Cameroon

The Parliament of Cameroon hosted a symposium for peace organised by members of the Focolare Movement, in partnership with the Network of Parliamentarians for Peace.



Through testimonies, including those of local tribal leaders, it was possible to present the effectiveness of the Cube of Peace* both in family relationships and also within communities and tribes. The local UNESCO office printed numerous Cubes of Peace and distributed the educational and information material to the participants.

Dialogue in the United Nations



The NGO New Humanity, which is inspired by the spirituality of unity, represents the Focolare Movement in the main headquarters of the United Nations (Paris, Geneva, Vienna, Rome, Nairobi, New York). In dialogue with all the other members of the international team, it aims to contribute towards achieving the unity of the human family, recognising the dignity and integral development of all human beings and the urgent need of caring for nature.

Founded in 1986, New Humanity NGO was granted Special Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1987 and has enjoyed General Consultative Status since 2005. Since 2008 it has also been recognised as a partner NGO of UNESCO and since 2020 also of the FAO. In 2021 it was granted observer status at UNEP, the United Nations Environment Programme.

New Humanity NGO's main mission is to promote fraternity as the foundation of justice, peace and solidarity and the mutual recognition of peoples, cultures, and faiths.



Nairobi



* The 'United World Ambassadors' programme aims to form a worldwide network of young people who want to make universal fraternity visible within institutions, offering good practices of dialogue, peace, solidarity implemented in local and global contexts. They are the spokespersons of New Humanity NGO at the national and global level, with governments, commissions or local agencies of major international institutions

Representatives of the *United World Ambassadors** from Cameroon, Rwanda and Kenya met with Joel Ongoto and Jacqueline Njeru of the UNESCO National Commission for Kenya.

Committed to promoting national, regional and international concerns in the fields of education, science, culture, information and communications, it is a partner of New Humanity's leadership training project, '*Together for a New Africa*'.

Paris

At the UNESCO conference '*Breaking down Barriers: What Role for Civil Society Organisations towards a Sustainable Future*', New Humanity offered some suggestions to enable participation, especially of young people.

Upon the initiative of New Humanity, a group of NGO partners of UNESCO and inspired by various religions (Pax Christi, Religions for Peace, World Fellowship of Buddhists, International Council of Jewish Women, IFOR, AISA for Muslims) proposed to **reintroduce interreligious dialogue into the programmes of UNESCO**. To encourage the States to submit an amendment on this subject to the General Conference, this group of NGOs organised a panel discussion with experts to present the benefits of interreligious dialogue education for all countries. The Sultanate of Oman invited the NGO group to come and hold this same panel discussion in November 2023.

Rome

The project of the community of Branquinha, in the Zona da Mata Alagoana (Brazil) was presented at the **Study Seminar to promote food security and the regeneration of agri-food systems** held at the **FAO**. The driving force behind the agricultural development of the area was the women and their care for the environment and for relationships. The meeting was organised in collaboration with the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to FAO, the Economy of Francis Movement and the Forum of Catholic-inspired NGOs in Rome as well as other groups.

Geneva

"**A Call for Peace in Ukraine**" is the title of the verbal statement, co-signed by New Humanity and 20 other NGOs and presented on 8 March 2022 at the 49th regular session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

25 official declarations were presented on the topics of **international solidarity, education to development, migration, and sustainable development**. The declaration "The Economy of Francis: A Vision for an Economy of the Future" was presented to the 61st Commission for Social Development.

New York

"Working for Peace - Lessons Learned" is the input given by the NGO New Humanity and the Movement for Unity in Politics to the **New Agenda for Peace 2023** proposed by the Office for Disarmament Affairs at the UN headquarters in New York.

A preparatory commission was set up for the **UN 2023 Conference on Water** in collaboration with the NGO Action for a United World (AMU).

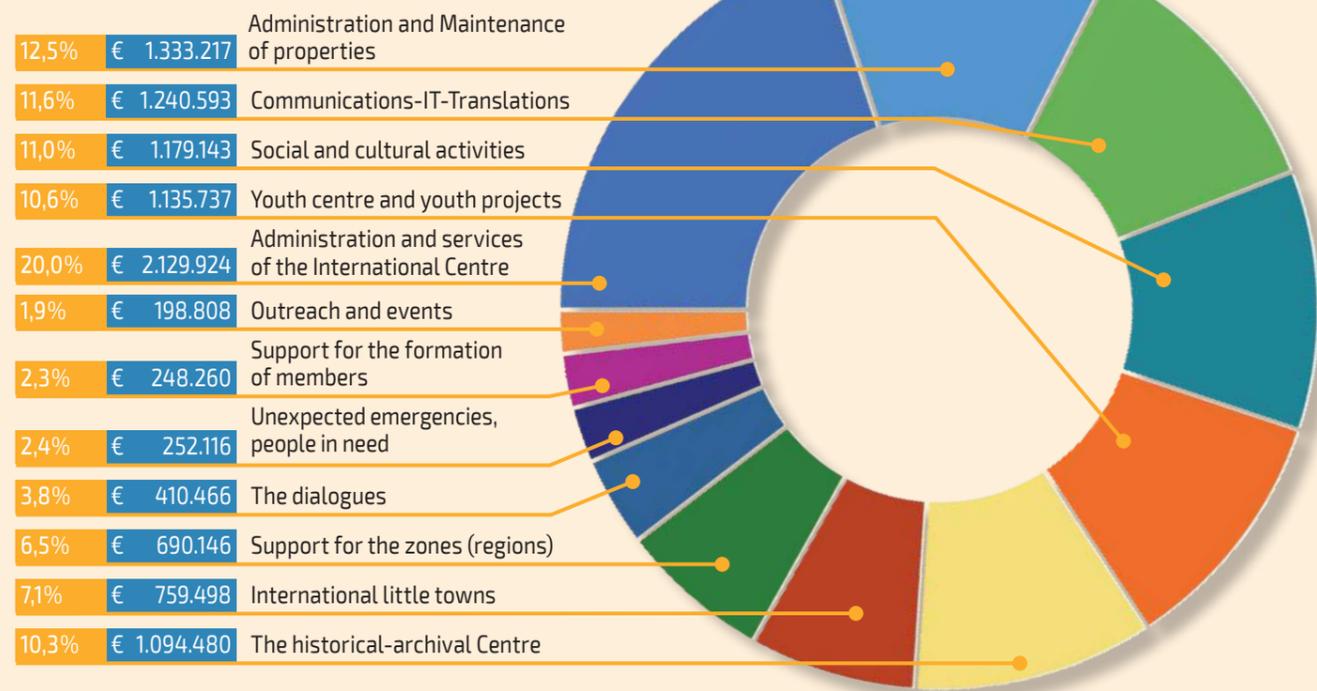
Mexico

Two young people from the United World Ambassadors network, a youth section of New Humanity NGO, participated from 28 to 30 September in the **UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development** (MONDIACULT 2022) in Mexico City, identifying areas and topics to work on with other NGOs and government entities.

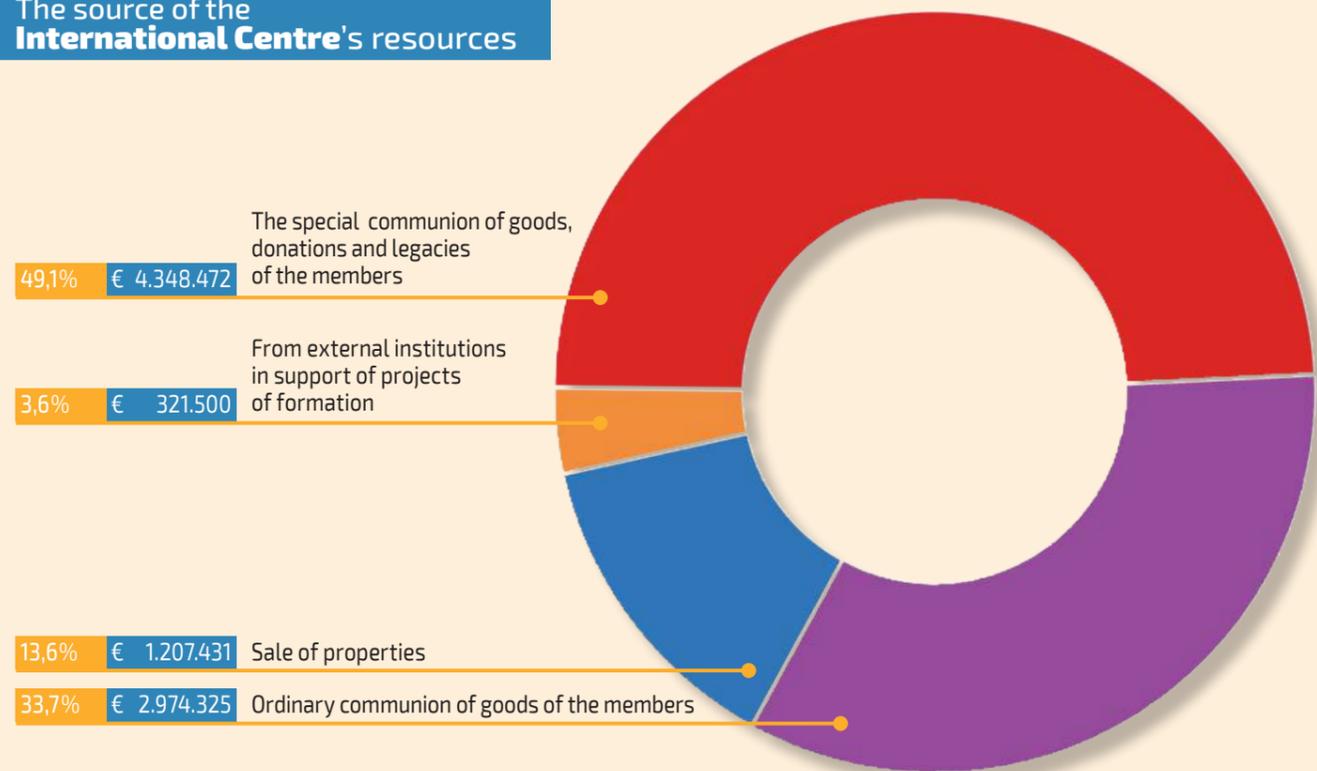
New Humanity ONG

New Humanity has adhered to the 'Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty', signed by the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, the European Parliament, the Parliament of World Religions, together with over 2,900 scientists, academics, associations and representatives of various religious faiths.

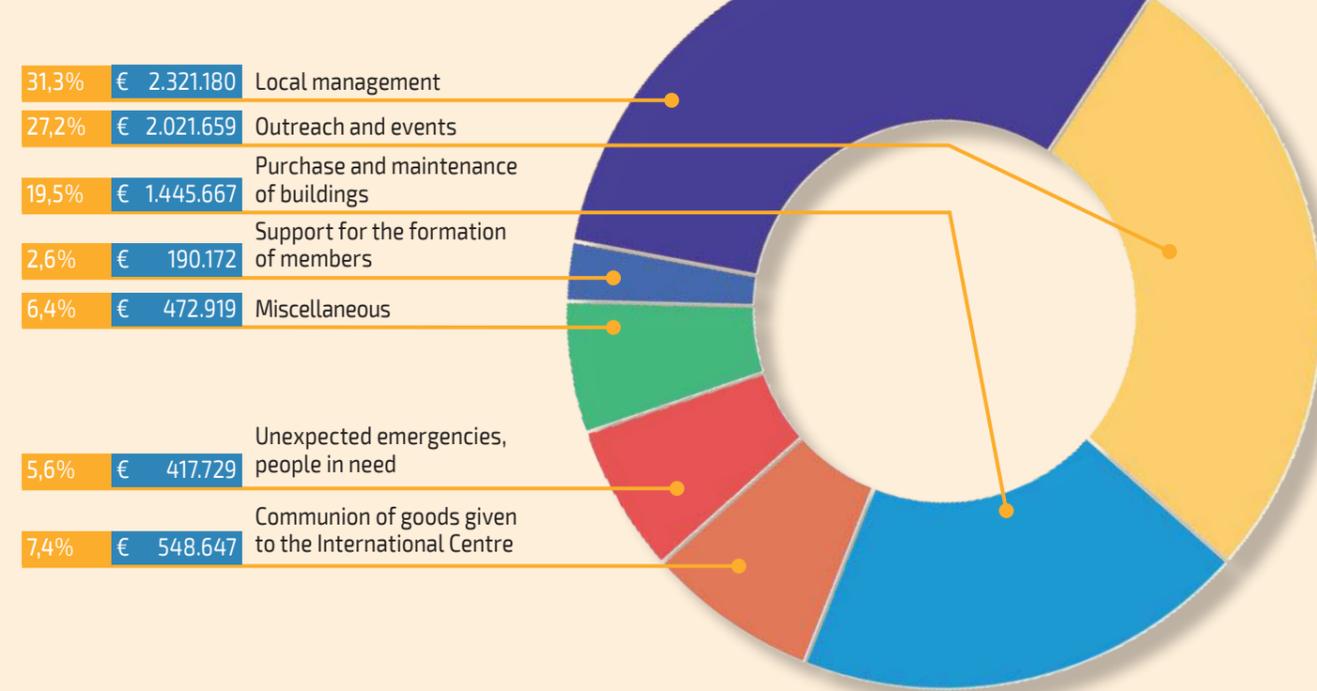
Where the resources are destined
International Centre



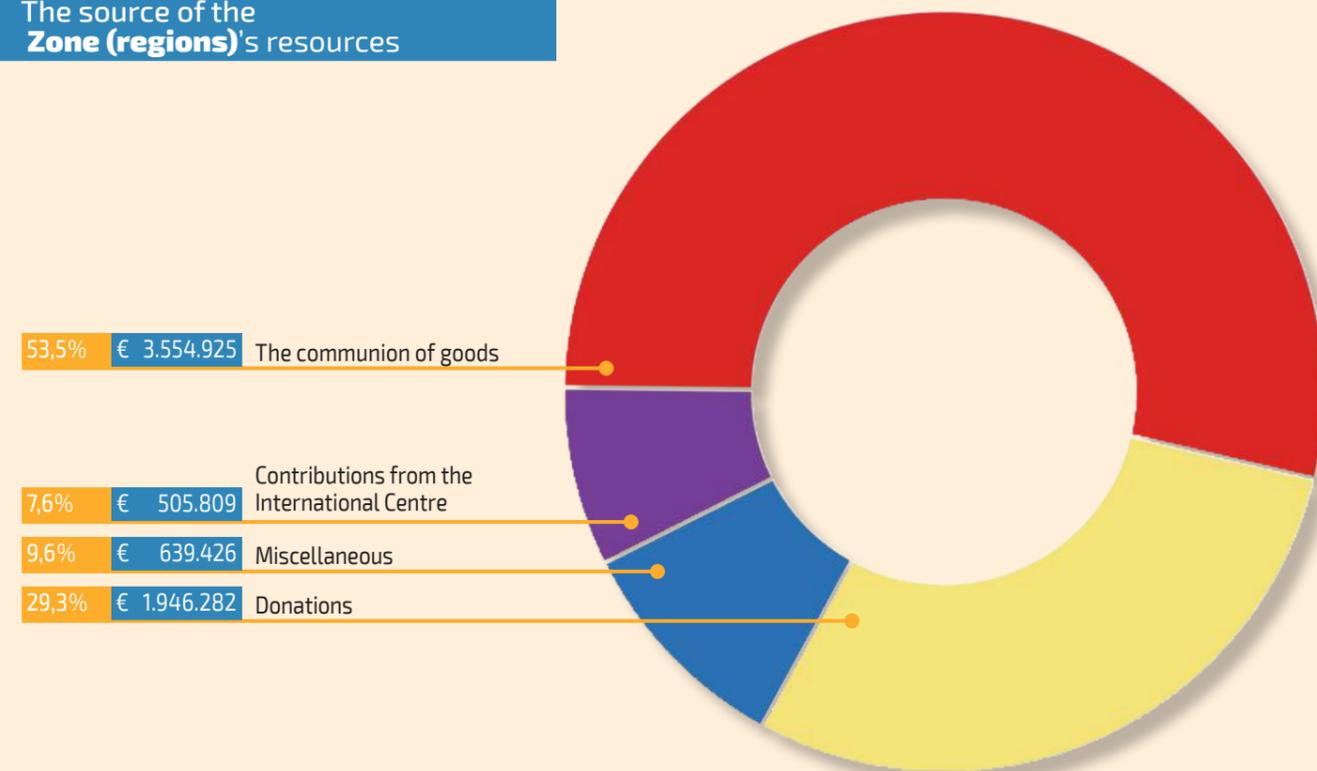
The source of the
International Centre's resources



Where the resources are destined in
Zone (regioni)



The source of the
Zone (regions)'s resources



The Value of Working Together: The Network of Stakeholders and Institutional Partners

The list of partners, collaborators, and stakeholders of the Focolare Movement in the field of dialogue encompasses an 80-year history of friendship, collaboration, projects, moments of spirituality and prayer. For reasons of space, only a few will be on this list, but we would like no one to feel forgotten in their tireless commitment to be an expression of dialogue and fraternity wherever they are. A complete list can be found in the 2021 edition of the Communion Report. Many partnerships in this 2022 edition can be found directly in the pages of the Report. Some are listed below:

- Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue (Vatican)
- Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity (Vatican)
- Ecumenical Patriarchate di Costantinopoli (Turkey)
- World Council of Churches (Switzerland)
- Fraternity of Communitarian Life (Bruderschaft von gemeinsamen Leben) (Germany)
- Together for Europe
- Global Christian Forum
- Christian Unity Commission CHARIS
- Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (IAO)
- Laudato Si' Movement
- Centro Pro Unione (Italy)
- The Anglican Centre in Rome (Italy)
- Methodist Ecumenical Office (Italy)
- International Ecumenical Chair Patriarch Athenagoras – Chiara Lubich (Italia)
- Muslim American Society (USA)
- World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP)
- Religions for Peace International
- Rissho Kosei-kai (Japan)
- World Fellowship of Buddhists (Thailand)
- Shanti Ashram (India)
- Anam Prem (India)
- Swadhyaya Movement (India)
- Faith Invest
- Representatives of various religions and their associations and movements.
These include: Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jews; Shia and Sunni Muslims; Mahayana and Theravada Buddhists; Hindus of various currents; followers of African traditional religions; Shintoists, Sikhs and Baha'i.
- Universities, research centres and academic institutions in different countries around the world
- Agencies of the United Nations

The Centres for Dialogue of the Focolare Movement

Centre for dialogue among the faithful of one's own church
Chiara Cuneo and Marc St-Hilaire
primodialogo@focolare.org

Centro "Uno" for the unity of Christians
Sandra Ferreira Ribeiro and Enno Dijkema
centrouno@focolare.org

Centre for Interreligious Dialogue
Rita Moussallem and Antonio Salimbeni
inter.rel@focolare.org

Centre for dialogue with persons of non-religious convictions
Maria Àngels Capellas and Ferdinando Garetto
centrodialogo@focolare.org

Centre for dialogue with culture
Catherine Belzung and Osvaldo Barreneche
centrodialogo.cultura@focolare.org

New Humanity ONG
info@new-humanity.org

Centre for Unity- Welwyn Garden City (Great Britain)
Ecumenical little town of Ottmaring (Germany)
School for Oriental Religions (SOR), (Tagaytay [Philippines])
Sophia University Institute, (Loppiano [Italy])
Centre for dialogue and peace (Belgium)
Centre for unity and peace, (Jerusalem [Holy Land])
School of Inculturation, (Nairobi [Kenya])

Statistics regarding Dialogue

More than

120.000
persons committed
to living a lifestyle
of dialogue

500.000
beneficiaries
of the projects

1.000
projects for
sustainable
development and
in defence of
human rights

500
initiatives
and projects
carried out
in 2022

Dialogue among the Religions

19
meetings and
symposia
since 2002

20
religious
leaders involved
internationally

100.000
people involved
in interreligious
dialogue

6 milioni
people contacted,
in collaboration
with partners
of various religions

4.700
collaborators
from various
religions

Dialogue among the Churches

530
Ecclesial
movements, new
communities and
associations

8.000
Christians of
various churches

600
leaders of various
Christian
Churches

300
Christian Communities
and Movements of
various Churches in
Europe linked to the
'Together for Europe'
network

Dialogue with Culture

72
professional
networks
actively involved
in this dialogue

1.850
professionals and
academics involved
in the different areas
of dialogue with
contemporary
culture

Dialogue with people of non-religious convictions

14
groups

400
collaborators
of non-religious
convictions

**To support the Focolare Movement's
commitment to dialogue**

You can contribute with a donation

by bank transfer to:

BPM - Banca Popolare di Milano;

Conto intestato a:

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IBAN: IT 28 L 05034 21900 000000008888

BIC e SWIFT: BAPPIT21H65

Or you can donate online at:

www.focolare.org

For further information please write to:

prograff@focolare.org

“That all may be one” (Jn 17, 21)

***We were born for these words,
for unity, to contribute
to achieving it in the world***

Chiara Lubich

Focolare Movement International Centre

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